

ELECTIONS 2016

FINAL REPORT OF THE LONG-TERM MONITORING OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND EARLY
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, 2016

ELECTIONS 2016

**FINAL REPORT OF THE LONG-TERM MONITORING OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND EARLY
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, 2016**

CIVIL - Center For Freedom
SKOPJE, 2017

ELECTIONS 2016: FINAL REPORT OF THE LONG-TERM MONITORING OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Publisher: CIVIL – Center for Freedom

For the Publisher: Xhabir M. Deralla

Editorial/Project Team of CIVIL

Xhabir M. Deralla (editor of the publication), Sinisha Stankovic (editor in CIVIL Media), Biljana Jordanovska, Monika Taleska, Maja Ivanovska, Dehran Muratov, Ermin Klimenta, Dr. Sasho Ordanoski (political analyst), Aleksandar Novakoski (legal expert), Sandra Gavrilovska (legal expert), Petrit Saraçini (media expert), Goran Naumovski (financial expert), Dragan Zelić (GONG, Croatia, election monitoring expert), Heather Roberson Gaston (USA, human rights expert), Sonja Eftovska (CIVIL Executive Committee Chairperson), Marija Tegovska, Marijana Gugoski, Diana Tahiri, Kreshnik Ajdini

Language services: Natasha Cvetkovska, Diana Tahiri, Kreshnik Ajdini, Heather Roberson Gaston, Gordana Aceska, MA

Layout & Design: Ivana Taleska

Photographs: Biljana Jordanovska, CIVIL archives

Illustrations: Miroslav Stojanovic, Xhabir M. Deralla

Printing: TP Dule 99, Skopje

Findings and standpoints presented in this publication are solely of CIVIL and its authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the donor.

This publication is financed with German funds from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe.

This publication is made available the terms of Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License.

Contacts:

CIVIL, Maksim Gorky 31/1, 1000 Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

02/5209176 |

civil@civil.org.mk | civil.mk@gmail.com Web: www.civil.org.mk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/civil.mk | Twitter: www.twitter.com/CivilMacedonia

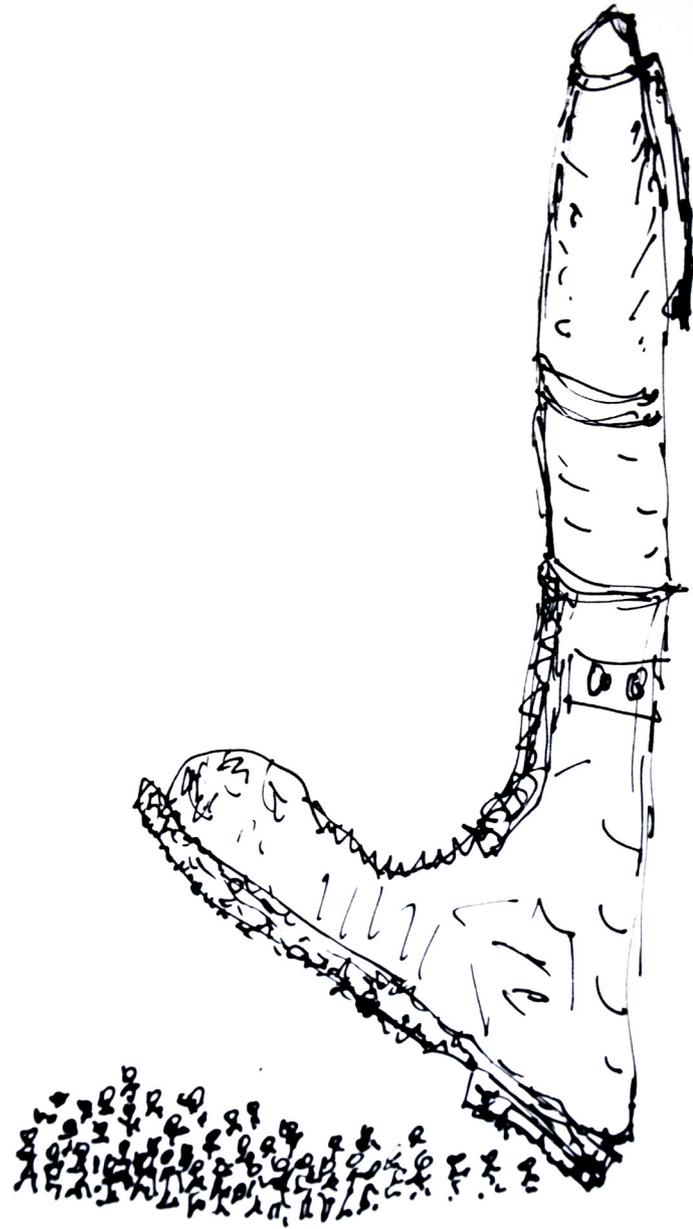
YouTube: www.youtube.com/c/Civil.Macedonia

ISBN-10 608-4815-06-5

ISBN-13 978-608-4815-06-8

EAN 9786084815068

CONTENT | 4 Fear, divisions, captured state... And defiance! | 10
Project "Free Macedonia" | 16 (Pre)Election Recommendations of
CIVIL | 22 Free elections are the only chance for restoring democracy
and the rule of law | 28 Fierce political pressure | 36 CIVIL demands
institutions and political parties to stop with the abuses and pressures
| 46 Citizens, do not be afraid to vote! | 52 A peaceful, but tense vot-
ing day, filled with numerous irregularities | 72 REVOTE IN TEARCE: A
small illustration of major problems | 78 Chaos: Voters Register and
State Election Commission | 88 Reports of foreign observation mis-
sions | 96 Macedonia needs a process similar to denazification | 106
Where there is fear, there is no democracy! | 114 The right to vote has
been violated! | 126 The Struggle for democracy in Macedonia | 134
Financing election campaigns of political parties | 142 The dirtiest
Media Campaign ever | 158 Orchestrated media back to the old ways:
Obedient government propagandists barely waited for the mandate of
the ad-hoc body to end! | 162 A Black Campaign | 170 Two hundred
difficult days for Macedonia | 188 The battles with the bad cyber-wolf
196 About The Project



FEAR, DIVI-
SIONS, CAP-
TURED STATE...
AND DEFIANCE!



Xabir Deralla, CIVIL, presentation of the principle: ZERO TOLERANCE for electoral irregularities

FEAR, DIVISIONS, CAPTURED STATE...AND DEFIANCE!

XHABIR DERALLA

Election processes in the Republic of Macedonia bring an entire palette of socio-political and institutional malfunctions to the surface. In many ways, the 2016 early parliamentary elections represented the legacy of ten years of institutional capture by the ruling parties. Structural violence, widespread political corruption, and violation of laws and democratic standards became a dominant feature of everyday life, marked with divisions, fear and intimidation. From blatant to subtle, these malfunctions and severe intrusion into the democratic system have created conditions for capturing of people's minds, social engineering at an unprecedented extent.

Traditional and new media continued to be an arena where dirty and aggressive propaganda replaced information, blurring the picture of what really goes on in the country. These challenges, CIVIL has been monitoring since 2008, concluding that the country's media, with very few exceptions, are not up to the task of keeping voters informed about the choices that lay ahead, as they are dominated by the interests of the political parties.

The electoral system, namely the State Election Commission (SEC), has brought an overwhelming portion of irregularities and inefficiencies to the election process. There has been tremendous national and international efforts, expertise, support and new legislation endowed to the SEC, providing unprecedented opportunities to this institution to safeguard the legitimacy of elections. In reality, the SEC became one of the most serious problems posed to the election process. Above all, the SEC has manifested utter arrogance and has insulted citizens by its silence and failure to act. By doing so, the SEC has stripped thousands of citizens from their constitutional right to vote on the Election Day.

To our great sadness, if not our surprise, our reports from Election Day are filled with instances of votes being cast by fictitious persons, or “phantom voters,” who have persistently remained on the voter rolls, while actual, living citizens of Macedonia were purged, with no system of redress. Only for this, if not for the many other failures, the SEC had to resign immediately.

The arrogance of the institutions, starting with SEC, and ending with the government and state agencies, have continued after the elections. These bodies did not act to protect the vote on Election Day, nor have they provided the answers for the numerous malfunctions noted during the election process in the country.

The election process and the campaign was filled with fierce nationalist hysteria, manipulation, and fear-mongering. The society emerged from this period more confused, angrier, and more fearful about the future than before.

Abuse of public money, and complete and ruthless abuse and pressure over the public administration were more than obvious. This is such a regular and long-standing practice already that it is rarely addressed even by relevant and independent entities. When CIVIL observers ask questions about the abuse of the administration, the reaction is the same everywhere: “Oh, but that’s normal!” Severe social and systemic failures are so deeply rooted and have been the reality of people’s life for so long that have become “normality” and “banality”.

Yet, some things changed in the last couple of years. It can be described with one single word. Defiance!

During the pre-election period and on Election Day itself, the office, monitoring teams, and many public events held by CIVIL - Center for Freedom saw record numbers of concerned citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, who wanted to take part in the political process or at the very least report their dissatisfaction and, in some cases, difficulties voting. This was preceded by two years of continuous protesting in which the streets were regularly overtaken by tens of thousands of citizens of Macedonia demanding a change in the system.

The struggle of citizens for freedom, democracy and justice has been reflected in the election results. Despite the tremendous pressure and fraudulent activities of the ruling parties, a vast number of citizens voted for the opposition. And the ruling party, VMRO-DPMNE, which has been responsible for the dangerous trends of state capture and nationalist rhetoric, emerged with only a thin margin rather than a resounding victory.

This election process had one more fantastic outcome. Tens of thousands of ethnic Albanians voted for the Social Democrats, which is considered an ethnic Macedonian political party. A strong message against nationalism and divisions has been openly displayed by all ethnic communities and has given hopes that citizens choose multiculturalism and democracy, instead of hatred and divisions.

However, Macedonia is far from the free elections its people deserve.

And, here we are. We proudly present a Report that is a result of selfless commitment of hundreds of people who worked together towards the creation of a comprehensive report and analysis of the political process and early parliamentary elections in the country. We bring the facts of reality, in spite of pressure and threats. We make no compromises, nor will we ever!

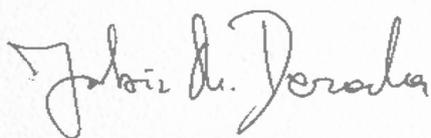
This is the fruit of the work of three hundred people who worked with CIVIL for a long year that was filled with challenges and pressure. Many citizens that we met on the streets and town squares called us The Spartans. We proudly carried this nickname and we will continue with untiring determination and persistency, to state the facts of reality regardless of how painful the truth may be.

On behalf of CIVIL, I would like to express my gratitude to the donors of the projects that were related to the political process and elections monitoring throughout the year of 2016.

Let me also express my gratitude and appreciation for the commitment of all observers of CIVIL, the experts and all authors in this report. I thank all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia who endowed their confidence in us and shared valuable information with our teams.

I can promise:

CIVILians will remain uncompromising and truthful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Xhabir D. Deralla". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Xhabir Deralla

President of CIVIL

PROJECT

"FREE

MACEDONIA"



“All weather conditions are good for activism” - CIVIL

PROJECT “FREE MACEDONIA”

SINISA STANKOVIC

Skopje – Makedonski Brod – Dolneni – Krusevo – Demir Hisar – Novaci – Bitola – Kumanovo – Skopje.... from early in the morning until late at night. Actually, until the next day early in the morning. With one vehicle, a 500 kilometer route across Macedonia, visiting 6 settlements in 18-19 hours...Within just one day of the project, officially called “Forward,” part of the activists of CIVIL – Center for Freedom are focused on strengthening awareness among citizens on the importance of free elections for the democratization of Macedonia. For me, as an editor of CIVIL Media, this project too, along with all the other projects we are implementing in parallel, is part of the mega-project for freeing Macedonia from fear and autocracy.

Macedonia 2016. February – March, April-May, September – November...Continuous campaign and constant pre-election promotions. The state in a deep crisis, citizens sunk in indolence and depression due to poverty, institutions held captive, a decade of stumbling in one place and frustrating hopelessness...

Activists of Civil – Center for Freedom have been for an entire year, through trips and visits, organizing public events and meetings with citizens, through research, surveys and analyses, through hundreds of texts, video materials and photos trying to show and prove that it can be different, that after ten years of regression and unseen theft, Macedonia still has a chance to return to the Euro-Atlantic path. And to finally embark on the path towards becoming a decent place to live.

Skopje – Makedonski Brod – Dolneni – Krusevo – Demir Hisar – Novaci – Bitola – Kumanovo – Skopje... From early in the morning until late at night. Actually, until the next day early in the morning. With one vehicle, a 500 kilometer route across Macedonia, visiting 6 settlements in 18-19 hours. Four activists, three journalists, one driver, one director, one editor, one professor, one political scientist, though only four CIVIL's, two men and two girls, due to "gender balance", but with all their "functions" in the non-governmental organization, in which everyone works on everything, every day. On what will be needed. Especially when observing the pre-election period, but also during election day and at post-election visits.

Such a four-member team was usually just one of the two or three teams that in parallel, during the preparations of the long awaited and two times prolonged early parliamentary elections, made three major tours across Macedonia last year.

And it gave its best to revive democracy and to establish new rules of the game, in which the citizens individually, without pressure, blackmail and intimidations, will decide who to give their trust and right to lead the country. In its own way, the CIVIL-way, which many in the political sphere (unfortunately, also in the "office" part of the civil society sector in Macedonia) do not understand and do not accept. However, CIVIL is also that, or precisely that.

Or... Skopje – Mavrovi Anovi – Rostuse – Centar Zupa – Debar – Vevcani – Belcista – Botun - Skopje.... From early in the morning until late at night. Actually, until the next day early in the morning. With one vehicle, a 400 kilometer route across Macedonia, visiting 7 settlements in 18-19 hours. A turbo route.

With thousands of handouts, two banners, two sets of speakers, sometimes also with a video screen and projector, with one plastic table "decorated" with posters at the sides, as an improvised stand at which information and educational material and publications in Macedonian and Albanian, but also in Turkish, Serbian, and Roma are placed...Materials whose contents speak about the importance of free expression, about the necessity to finally organize free, democratic and fair elections in Macedonia, about the rights of voters and the duties of the state. Three-four laptops, two cameras, a projector, one camcorder, all this in the "trunk" and on the back seats of the car...Activism, journalism, idealism. Three in one. On the ground. Among citizens. So that their voice may also be heard. To find out about their troubles...

Conversations with representatives of political parties at the local level and with members of NGOs, local media appearances and outdoor press-conferences – in front of CIVIL's banner or in front of a local landmark, about the irregularities discovered in the pre-election period, on the campaign and the election process, on the financing of the parties and the “phantom” voters, on the unpreparedness of the election administration at the local level...

Meeting with residents of settlements at central squares, in front of local shops and catering facilities, but also on the fields and gardens, in their homes...Handing out flyers, explaining the goals of the projects on monitoring the elections, mobilizing observers, strengthening awareness on the importance of free elections for the future of Macedonia.

Regularity and frequency create recognition, whereas the songs on our speakers are a reminder that CIVIL is again visiting. Citizens mainly approached us in a reserved manner, concerned about who might see them, but still, they approached us, to complain, to react, to ask for help...To seek jobs for their children, social and health care protection, equality before the law, humane and honest treatment by state institutions. And after that, also a census and a clean Voters Register, and municipal authorities that will solve local problems, and not– “high politics” and also houses of culture, and health care facilities and pharmacies, and in some places even electricity, water supply and a sewage system...

The same replies were repeated at every one of our trips about the natural beauties of Macedonia and about the poverty, and we also had many random encounters that were simply fulfilling and will remain in our memories for a long time. Having tea with a mayor whose voters live mainly off of cash transfers from abroad, from relatives who have moved out of the country, but one who believes that the “people will come back”, or having coffee with representatives of the local authorities, who admit that the situation is extremely difficult, but regularly stress that the ones before were worse and that the citizens were absolutely right for electing them, because after all, something is being done...Or having a talk with a tractor driver passing by, who promises to give the flyer to his son who has “finished school”, but although unemployed, is running away from the tractor...Or, a painless “transfer” – from provocative hecklings from a group of elderly residents, who drink beer, sitting on crates in front of a local shop with an “interior design” and an offer on the shelves that dates back to the sixties of the last century – in a political debate on the parties and elections in a Macedonian manner, spiced

also with geostrategic forecasts on Macedonia's place in the foreign political agendas of the US and Russia...

All of our interlocutors, regardless of the region in which they live in, ethnic affiliation, religious..., had a desire to talk about what is troubling them, about injustice, about the existential problems that are reducing families and are increasing the depopulation in Macedonia. But the thing that stunned us in the first part of 2016, in our meetings with citizens, was the –fear. In their eyes, in their gestures, in the manner in which they secretly uttered a few words while passing by...

The almost unbelievable level of ignorance of the average resident in the settlements in the interior of Macedonia, allows(ed) party PR-experts and spinners to manipulate and endlessly intimidate, playing the card of hopelessness built in the decade of silence (“Be quiet or it could get worse!”) and lies. The many, too many conversations with citizens, helped us in dissuading – that the local power figure and his bullies in party uniforms, or the owner of the company or the director, or the children's' professor, or even the doctor, or inspector, from the police or from the regional units of the central government..., cannot threaten and simply cannot know who they voted for...That no one is recording the polling station and that they can freely express themselves and choose as their own representative the one they have trust in, and not to succumb to threats to commit a criminal offense by taking a photo of their ballot, or by providing the “sure list” of 10-15-30 friends, colleagues, neighbors or relatives who will surely vote for “our people”.

However, what is encouraging is that there is an evident decrease in fear and there is certain freeing from the constraints of the Party – State. The “bombs,” the student protests, and the Colorful Revolution have all opened the enchained doors...Something has finally begun to change. With the winds of enthusiasm blowing in the backs of young colleagues, I realized that CIVIL's project, for restoring hope, is succeeding...Because it has to. Simply because there is no alternative. Macedonia has to go forward! Towards freedom...

(Sinisa Stankovic is a journalist and writer, chief editor of CIVIL Media – organizational unit of CIVIL – Center for Freedom).

(PRE)ELECTION
RECOMMENDA-
TIONS
OF CIVIL



Conference: "Free Elections 2016" (22.11.2016)

(PRE)ELECTION RECOMMENDATIONS OF CIVIL

The public needs to know that CIVIL – Center for Freedom made outstanding efforts to contribute to overcoming of the political crisis since its early stages in 2008, and particularly after its escalation at the beginning of 2015.

CIVIL is involved in elections monitoring since 2008 and has gained extensive experience in this area, introducing new approaches and methodologies that correspond with the country's reality. Political crisis, in our view, has started already in 2008, and was only getting worse, particularly since the forceful ousting of the opposition MPs on December 24, 2012. After the series of public exposure of the wiretapped conversation ordered by the government and revealed by the opposition, the international community has offered its assistance and mediation, which resulted with signing political agreements on June 2 and July 15.

CIVIL has issued numerous public releases with analysis and recommendation on the process as a whole, including those that are related to the elections. It is important to mention here that CIVIL has revealed most of the electoral fraud in its reports "Unscrupu-

lous struggle for power” on the local elections in 2013 and “Democracy disqualified” on the presidential and pre-term parliamentary elections in 2014. Wiretapped conversations revealed by the opposition are a bitter confirmation of our findings on the elections, as well as of the numerous reports on human rights situation in the country, issued in the last decade or longer.

Here, we would like to outline the summary of the main recommendations that we issued in the previous period, in an attempt to prompt the domestic and international public on the burning issues that need to be solved or are in process of being solved.

ONE ELECTORAL DISTRICT; OPEN LISTS; VOTING OF THE DIASPORA

Macedonia should become one electoral district. We are advocating for open lists in order to obtain greater influence of voters. These solutions have been presented to the public for quite some time now, but were ignored by the ruling parties. The electoral model of the Republic of Macedonia has been amended several times, but solutions that would lead to the representation of all communities and of smaller political parties were never taken into consideration, such as the model under which the whole country is one electoral district.

At the same time, open candidate lists will ensure greater democracy within political parties, and more importantly, they will increase the accountability of MPs towards their constituents.

The voting of the diaspora must be redefined and ensure that the value of the vote of the diaspora is equal to that of the voters in the country. The most efficient way to achieve this is that the diaspora will be voting in one electoral district, and that is Macedonia.

CIVIL also offered a series of other solutions within the electoral system in the country and shall continue with their presentation to all citizens, not just to the participants involved in the negotiations behind closed doors.

We are proposing specific solutions with simple and clear measures that must be taken in order to eliminate the serious shortcomings of the electoral system. Certainly, we are aware that political will and virtue are required for their adoption and implementation.

SOLUTIONS FOR THE CATASTROPHIC CONDITION OF THE VOTERS REGISTER

The voters Register is in a catastrophic condition. During the elections in 2013 and 2014, CIVIL revealed the problem with the non-existing entrances, residence buildings, apartments, phantom voters; CIVIL managed to disclose the demographic intervention and the operation of Pustec, and many other serious problems that have provided citizens with an unforgettable voting experience in the electoral processes as of 2008. The reports Unscrupulous Struggle for Power from 2013 and Democracy Disqualified from 2014, can serve as a reminder of these extremely difficult and disgraceful elections.

Therefore, we support the model of an active voter registration that should be compulsory for all. In that context, in order to avoid further manipulations with the number of voters and demographic interventions, the Law on registration of residence needs to be improved. The problem with multiple documents that emerged during last year's elections will be solved by providing a fingerprint during the active registration.

REFORMS IN THE STATE ELECTIONS COMMISSION (SEC)

The reforms in the SEC are essential for the elections. We believe that the SEC should be a professional body composed of domestic and foreign experts and representatives of civil society, rather than political parties' representatives. Given the circumstances, such a fundamental reform seems impossible at this time, but must be taken into consideration and implemented in the foreseeable future.

If such a reform is not possible at this time, then it is important for the opposition to have a majority in the SEC in order to ensure conditions for free elections. This majority should be realistic, and not fictitious, as is the case with the current composition of the SEC when the opposition was practically a minority during the past elections.

At the same time, the SEC should be the main carrier of the election process and of all the measures and projects related to the electoral processes. The competencies of SEC must be increased and not just on paper. One of the most important competencies of the SEC should be the Voters Register, not to depend on the will of the institutions, which have justly lost their trust, as is the case with the Ministry of Interior.

REFORMS OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE MRTV AND THE AGENCY FOR AUDIO AND AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA SERVICES

There will be minimal effects by reforming only the public broadcasting service MRTV, as the corrupt practices will continue furthermore in regards to the remaining media in the country, whose impact is much greater.

Therefore, the control over the Agency for audio and audiovisual media services (AVMS), and accordingly over the Agency for Electronic Communications (AEC), needs to be undertaken by the opposition in cooperation with independent experts and the civil society.

FREE ELECTIONS ARE
THE ONLY CHANCE FOR
RESTORING DEMOCRACY
AND THE RULE OF LAW



High turnout of participants to every event of CIVIL related to elections and political situation (photographic record of the conference "Free Elections 2016", 22.11.2016)

FREE ELECTIONS ARE THE ONLY CHANCE FOR RESTORING DE- MOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW

We are deeply determined that the given deadline for preparation of early parliamentary elections in April 2016 is too short. Our strong recommendation is to extend this period to 18 months or more, so that the necessary conditions for holding free elections may be created. In particular, we recommend this period to start from the day of the formation of the transitional government – was one of the recommendations of CIVIL – Center for Freedom, published on June 9, 2015, with which we demanded urgent measures for overcoming the political crisis and for restoring democracy in the Republic of Macedonia.

Seven months later, Macedonia is still torn by a political crisis, accompanied with aggressive and dirty political campaigns, strong pressure on the electorate, media manipulations and abuse of public resources and of the administration. The situation in Macedonia is not improving, whereby, the ruling parties remain deaf to all the requests and recommendations of CIVIL and of a series of relevant civil society organizations and

experts. The ruling parties continue to violate human rights and suppress freedom of expression and media freedom.

Contrary to the Agreement for overcoming the political crisis (Przino June 2/July 15) with the mediation of the international community, with which Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski undertook the obligation to carry out urgent reform efforts in key areas related to the rule of law, the media and electoral processes, not only have they not been implemented, instead, the abuses and undemocratic governing have only deepened over the last year.

CIVIL demanded a resignation of the government nine months ago, as the only logical conclusion to the political crisis, responsibility for the abuses and the crime for which there are indications in the wiretapped conversations that were released by the opposition, and then to have a transitional government of experts established that would conduct quick, but essential reforms.

That process implies revision of the Electoral Code, changing the electoral system with which Macedonia would become one election unit and introducing open lists, revising and improving the Voters register, reform of the State Election Commission, separation of the party from the state, reforms in the media and media regulation in order to eliminate the party dictate on the media, establishing a commission or institution for investigation based on the wiretapped conversations, investigation into the security crisis in Kumanovo, and conducting free elections at the end of that process.

The negotiations are not providing results, and in government remains the largest part of the structure upon which no one can even consider to implement any form of a democratic, citizen control. This is the structure that is directly responsible for the long-term political crisis and for the erosion of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Briefly, with this kind of implementation of the political agreement, the agony in the Republic of Macedonia only continues.

More specifically, what is left in function is the machinery that is governed by Nikola Gruevski and his cousin Sasho Mijalkov, who left the position Director of the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence only formally. The regime of Nikola Gruevski continued with the well-known practices of abuse of the administration and of the public resources, political corruption and media manipulations.

Guided by the experience of the long-term monitoring of elections, of socio-political processes and of the situation of human rights and freedoms in Macedonia, CIVIL insisted nine months ago on implementation of the priority measures, which are connected to a series of other requirements that were not discussed at all during the negotiations.

CIVIL has been demanding an end to the political persecution since 2010, release of all political prisoners, and conducting early local and presidential elections simultaneously with the parliamentary elections, when there will be minimum conditions for them to be free.

Unfortunately, all attempts of civil society representatives failed, including those of CIVIL, in terms of having a transparent process for overcoming the political crisis that involves more stakeholders, and not just the leaders of the four main political parties.

Let us recall that the political crisis started with the parliamentary elections in 2008, and culminated with “Black Monday” on December 24, 2012, with the violent removal of opposition MPs and journalists from Parliament in order to, at any cost, approve the extremely high budget in the ever poorer Macedonia.

The negotiations of the four leaders of the main parliamentary parties really did lead to the signing of the political agreement, however, the obstructions of the government to every attempt for its implementation continue to endanger the very idea of holding free elections on April 24, 2016. Basically, the agreement for overcoming the political crisis has transformed into a reward for Prime Minister Gruevski, a means of extending his political life and maintaining undemocratic policies and practices in the country.

The government continues with pressures, blackmail and threats against the opposition and neutral citizens, Gruevski is forcing his campaign through the media, he is indebteding and is acting carelessly with taxpayers’ money, with which he is, in fact, buying their loyalty. At the same time, through an expensive and dirty campaign, Gruevski’s campaign is satanizing the opposition, the civil society and – often – the international community.

If we look at CIVIL’s experience of only the past three years, not to mention the numerous other organizations and institutions at the national and international level, we will see that the alarm has been switched on long time ago. CIVIL revealed a great deal of electoral fraud in the reports “Unscrupulous struggle for power” in 2013 and “Democracy Disqualified” in 2014, followed by numerous analyses and recommendations on the situ-

ation of human rights and socio-political processes. In this sense, we can single out the analysis and the review of the challenges and recommendations published on September 17 “Case of Macedonia: quick recap” , as well as recent reports concerning fierce political pressure on employees in the public administration and public enterprises, as well as intensified party-political pressure on teachers.

One of the main points of aggressive populism of Gruevski is to demonstrate that he enjoys loyalty by the people, that his governing is more than that, that he is a savior. This is not difficult for him to achieve, having in consideration the unlimited resources that he seized. Hence, apart from implementing criminal policies, he is also criminalizing relations in society, and is making the citizens accomplices in his own transgression.

Therefore, the only recommendation that can be delivered at this moment to the international community, Washington and Brussels, is for them to give the green light to postponing the elections, but without delaying the deadline for the resignation of Prime Minister Gruevski.

FIERCE

POLITICAL

PRESSURE



FIERCE POLITICAL PRESSURE

Reports on discrimination, harassment and threats on the basis of political affiliation intensified right after the Agreement to overcome political crisis of June 2 and July 15, 2015 was concluded. The reports of CIVIL – Center for Freedom are based on information submitted by citizens electronically or in person, at meetings with representatives of civil society, employees in the public and private sector, political parties at the local level, at training seminars and on many other grounds.

There is information on political pressure coming from around the entire country. This is one more report in the long series of reports and information that CIVIL has been publishing for years. This one is based on multiple testimonies on fierce political pressure in several municipalities in the country [we do not specify names and locations in order to protect our sources].

Photos, videos and anonymous statements from several sources speak of systematic abuse and pressure on a political basis, with the purpose of controlling the electorate. Our interlocutors say they expect even greater pressure as elections approach.

The research team of CIVIL came across photos of SMS messages and lists that are to contain “secured voters”, as well as communication from the social networks. Our sources are categorical to remain anonymous out of fear that they and their family members could face even greater pressure, getting fired from work and many other “penalties” foreseen for those who are disobedient.

Employees in municipalities, primary and secondary schools, kindergartens, communal enterprises and many other institutions at local and central level are targets of a systematic political agit-prop processing.

A lawyer from one large municipality in Macedonia also testifies for CIVIL, saying that there has been a growing number of public sector employees who are seeking for legal advice on how to get protected from political pressure imposed by the management. According to our source, employees in public enterprises state that their managers urge them to come to party headquarters and to the municipality where they receive orders to instruct their subordinates to compile lists of 5-6 or more politically neutral citizens. This “operation” has a purpose, to influence the neutral voters to vote for the ruling party at the elections in April next year.

Sources say political pressure is even more aggressive than in previous years. Employees are obliged to submit lists to the senior officials in the public enterprises in which they must enter a name, surname and phone number of “secured voters”.

The employees in the public enterprises and in the public administration are usually threatened with firing or with firing of their family members and friends, who may be employed in the same or another institution or public enterprise. Those who have temporary contracts are threatened that their contracts will not be extended. Employees who fail to submit lists of “secured voters” are downgraded or are transferred to other job positions, making their work harder.

The political pressure on the public administration and public enterprises is accompanied by various forms of discrimination and harassment of staff, which is contrary to the Administration Law, and violates the Electoral Code.

There are not any harassment cases resolved at court, so the only way for public servants to protect their jobs and their bare existence is to obey and become complicit in the violation of the laws, as their party appointed managers command.

Employees in the public sector are not the only victims of political pressure. Workers in private firms are also exposed to political pressure.

The pressure that the private sector suffers is another story. It is directly connected to the pressure that is performed through the Public Revenue Office. As the time for elections approaches, so do the pressure intensify.

It is not known whether a citizen has initiated a procedure against political pressure, in accordance to the law.

*

The investigation teams and long-term observers of CIVIL came across a series of information and statements on constant political pressure being put on teachers in several primary and secondary schools across the country. More specifically, CIVIL acquired direct knowledge of the difficult situation of teachers in five major municipalities outside of Skopje, and four educational institutions in the capital city.

The teaching staff has been in an increasingly difficult situation in recent years, and the pressures that are being made brings teachers in primary and secondary schools in the most humiliating position. This report is based on statements and documentation that were given to us by numerous interlocutors who insisted on anonymity, fearing for their jobs. Nevertheless, they must be credited for daring to speak out and helping us expose the extremely harmful policies and practices of the government, which has completely politicized the education in the country.

“With so many trivial changes in the laws, so many projects for every child and every teacher, so many reforms of the Government, we have arrived to a situation in which our education is in a desperate condition.” – says a high school teacher.

Teachers are facing a wide variety of discriminatory procedures, pressure, blackmail and threats that are mostly based on political affiliation of the victims of such practices. When speaking of political affiliation, it can be noticed that many of our interlocutors are, in fact, politically neutral, but have the same treatment as the supporters of the opposition. On several occasions, our team received statements from witnesses who claim that those who are politically neutral are put under even stronger pressure than the supporters of the opposition.

Concerning the education system itself, there is a situation in which instead of having teachers performing their work, they are overloaded with all sorts of administrative responsibilities, and face pressure, blackmail and threats. That encouraged the activities of the teachers who recognized the disastrous education policies of the government and demanded a stop to the bad education reforms. They came out in support of their students, and received great support from the parents of many students.

However, instead of meeting the needs of the students, teachers and parents, the government hurried to create a dirty campaign against the protesters, whereby the civil activism of the teachers was literally outlawed. The teachers who dared to stand up for the students' requests for a better education and against the bad reforms, faced pressures, penalties and cruel slandering.

"There are constantly pressures, of all kinds. For example, after activities of the Teachers plenum, the director has a precise list of the participants. The Director invites everyone individually for a conversation, during which he threatens and harshly insults the 'accused'. Any engagement in the plenum or in any of the 'marked' organizations such as Civil is characterized as a betrayal, whereby, these initiatives and organizations are called by various names such as 'illegitimate, treacherous, criminal, Sorosoids, dark forces', and many more. And you must listen to it"- says a group of teachers in a municipality in Macedonia.

Because of their "political ineligibility" and "disobedience" towards the party appointed managerial staff in schools, the teachers are facing penalties and dismissals, non-extension of employment contracts, drastically reduced number of classes, more specifically, reduced salaries. In addition to being supervised by their managers, the "disobedient and unfit" teachers are supervised and frequently under pressure from party soldiers from among their fellow colleagues.

Nonetheless, we learn that all employees within the educational institutions in which we have our sources are under pressure to draw up lists of "secured voters", as is the case with employees in other parts of the public administration and public enterprises, as we recently reported in the report titled "CIVIL reveals cases of fierce political pressure."

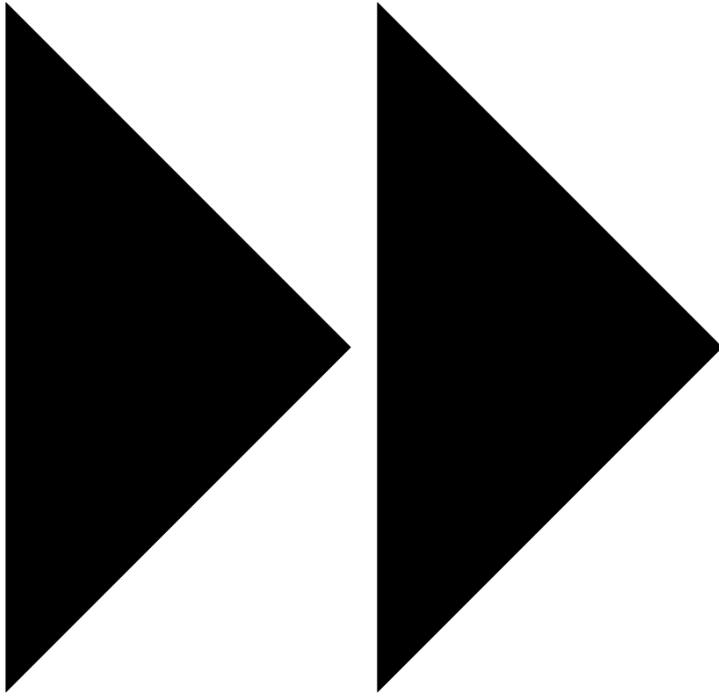
The government is controlling and is performing political pressure through the Ministry, more specifically, through the Bureau for Education, which is conducting abnormally intense visits and inspections. Usually these inspections are announced, but this is done only for the “eligible” teachers, not for the other teachers.

According to our sources assistant directors and class teachers in secondary schools were dismissed, or had their classes taken away for supporting the Secondary Plenum or the Colorful Revolution.

CIVIL – Center for Freedom, has many times publically called upon the employees in the public administration to resist political pressure and to report such cases to the organization.



CIVIL DEMANDS
INSTITUTIONS
AND POLITICAL
PARTIES TO STOP
WITH THE ABUSES
AND PRESSURES



CIVIL DEMANDS INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES TO STOP WITH THE ABUSES AND PRES- SURES

CIVIL – Center for Freedom has published a periodic report from the monitoring of the election process. The report summarizes a brief selection of the reports of CIVIL's long-term observers, the reports of the online application on the website Free Elections and those of the citizen journalists.

STATE ELECTION COMMISSION AND THE VOTERS REGISTER

The citizens of Republic of Macedonia have the right to know what is happening with their money, which has been put at the disposal of the State Election Commission and all other institutions and political parties in the country.

Instead, CIVIL has noted a complete lack of transparency in the processes that are currently moving towards their finalization, ahead of the elections scheduled for only one month from today.

The revision of the Voters Register is not producing results. In over 200 cases of phantom voters that have been submitted to CIVIL during the spring months of this year, we note that only two of those cases have been resolved, that is, in which the data has been corrected. Two out of two hundred!

However, more worrying are the cases where phantom voters have been removed from certain addresses, only to find completely new voters erroneously listed at the same addresses afterwards. These cases have been reported to CIVIL, after concerned citizens had previously submitted complaints to the SEC and to registry offices. They also state they were treated as ping pong balls going from one institution to another.

Citizens who have moved permanently out of the country and have been living abroad for more than 20 years, yet still figure on the Voters Register, are another specific case. Even though we learn that there are applications and requests for a number of those people to be removed from the voter list, that is, to be put on a separate list, their names still figure on the Voters Register, but not on the separate list with those who have moved permanently out of the country. Furthermore, citizens are also complaining that the procedure is unclear, and that there is little to no feedback concerning the status of their applications.

One member of CIVIL's monitoring team conducted thorough research on the procedures that are provided by the SEC for the participation of citizens in the revision of the Voters Register, and at the moment is being checked by the organization's legal team, after which we will publish the research.

In this context we would like to stress that the SEC and the other competent institutions need to be aware that at the moment they are relying excessively on the help of the citizens of our country, and that in return they are not offering the bare minimum of transparency and quality of services. And yet their incomes are outstanding, while the travel costs they claim from the budget of the SEC are as if they were living on one of our neighboring planets.

CIVIL concluded that the procedures and competencies in this process often change and are not clear enough. Despite the dynamic campaign to inform the public, and the kindness of the staff of the SEC and other institutions that are trying to explain the rights of the citizens in the process of revising the Voters Register, many questions still remain unanswered, while citizens continue wandering through the labyrinths of the inefficient institutions and their regional offices.

Our monitoring teams and researchers came across numerous cases in which abandoned houses, ruins, and even non-existing buildings are home to phantom voters. The story from Prilep, on voters registered at addresses of abandoned houses, and the case with the parking lot in Tetovo, are just an illustration of the conditions that have been noticed all around the country.

The public should know at what address are now the dozens of residents of Pustec, who previously were unveiled at an address on the street of Maksim Gorki in the center of Skopje. At what address are the voters of other such cases? We want to know and we have the right to know, whereby the institutions have an obligation to respond!

Furthermore, CIVIL also received reports on residences having double addresses, with different tenants, one of which who actually exist, while the others do not. What is actually happening?

ABUSE OF THE POOREST FOR ELECTORAL PURPOSES

The abuse of issues related to social injustice in Republic of Macedonia is notorious and has a long tradition in the electoral processes and contexts. More specifically, political parties are playing with the expectations of the voters in the country on a regular basis.

The entire political and social context is set in an electoral context, accompanied with difficult political shocks, occasional security challenges and tensions, along with frequent election processes, among which are three early parliamentary election processes. The elections scheduled for December 11, will be the fourth early parliamentary elections in eight years. All early parliamentary elections are being held in increasingly more tense situations in all spheres of society and the state, accompanied with serious violations of human rights, lack of democracy and of the rule of law.

The domestic and international public are familiar with the facts on the ruling of the governing coalition in Macedonia, for quite some time now. This governing is accompanied with serious indications and material evidence on serious criminal abuses of power, structural violence, political corruption and electoral theft, which are completely destroying the social fabric and political system of the country.

In such conditions, the main objective of the governing structures is to maintain and strengthen their power and control. This is achieved through fierce politicization, that is by, captivating the state and society. With the control over the finances and of the economy, it was easy for the governing structures to introduce a highly corrupt practice of constantly buying the inclination of voters, in combination with structural violence and fierce media manipulation. Unrealistic promises usually border with criminal abuse of public resources, the budget and of the administration in the period between two election cycles, only to have it later on pass into an open and systematic abuse and into an anti-democratic rule.

The social – political system has been knocked out, which also knocks out all the values in which democracy and the rule of law can be fostered and developed. Therefore, the widespread scheme of abusing the expectations of citizens, regardless of how obvious the unscrupulous deceptions and crimes are, seems as a normal and everyday incidence. That means that the promises that are made for things to which the citizens are already entitled, according to the Constitution and laws, are attributed to as the mercy of the Party, which is acting as the owner of life, privacy and of people's aspirations. The division of suitable and not suitable is becoming a criterion for who is to receive social assistance or a certain job for a miserable salary and in harsh working conditions, and is also becoming the highest achievement of the social policy of the ruling structures.

It is precisely in the domain of issues related to social justice that expectations are deliberately being increased, and in a highly corruptive manner as well. Political corruption has deeply been embedded into all aspects of society and the state, both at the local and national level.

These policies and practices lead to a situation in which electoral processes, mildly speaking, are problematic and illegitimate, even if there are no other manipulations, abuses and stealing of votes.

Creating unrealistic expectations by promising jobs or doling out other social benefits in exchange for votes and as well as other demonstrations of loyalty, are the most common form of abuse of the socially vulnerable citizens. Many of the promises represent discrimination and abuse and a practical introduction of political corruption, and at large scale at all levels. That, in given conditions, can only be implemented by the parties that actually possess the power and dispose with the money of the citizens. With such behavior, parties in power, in advance, manipulate the election result, violate the Constitution and the laws of Republic of Macedonia and narrow the space for voters to freely express their will on the day of the elections.

PRESSURE, BLACKMAIL AND THREATS

CIVIL notes hundreds of cases of pressure, blackmail and threats on citizens throughout the country. Regardless of the formal progress in the implementation of the political agreement between the four parties, we still notice the violation of human rights and freedoms in the electoral context, while structural violence and political discrimination have continued with almost the same pace.

THERE IS NO PROGRESS IN THE MEDIA SPHERE

CIVIL has not seen substantial progress in the media sphere. Hate speech continues, along with calls for the execution of human rights defenders and the dirty campaign that is being carried out through certain media and media exposed government apologists. CIVIL notes hate speech also from some internet editions close to the opposition.

OBSTRUCTIONS BY THE CRIMINAL COURT

The attitude of the Criminal Court in Skopje is also worrying, which suddenly has a problem issuing timely certificates of no criminal conviction for election candidates of the Liberal Party and SDSM. We demand for those who carry out such obstructions to be held responsible, and we urge those who are conscious administrators to share with us facts on the abuses of the administration in this process. We guarantee complete anonymity for those who will report abuses and pressures in the administration.

ABUSE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES AND PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA

Abuse of public resources is noted in many cases across the country. In the latest case, with the transportation of the participants to the meeting of the Union of Women of the ruling party, with buses from the Public Transport Enterprise Skopje, silence of the public enterprise is noted in terms of who has paid for this service and whether anyone has really paid. Also, the use of official vehicles for party purposes is evident and has to stop.

We demand that the institutions respect the Law on protection of personal data and not share such data with party headquarters. CIVIL received reports from which it is obvious that personal data of citizens are abused and used for party surveys, propaganda and pressures.

In one case, as an illustration, we noted that a citizen whose mobile phone number is registered to another family member was receiving calls from party headquarters addressing her by her name and last name. This citizen had given her phone number as a contact in one health care facility and in a bank. This means that one of these two entities had given out her personal contact information for the needs of the political party.

ABUSE OF MINORS

Strong pressure on minors and using children to condition their parents can be noted in primary and secondary schools throughout Macedonia. This practice must stop immediately, while those responsible for such criminal behavior against children and young people need to be held accountable. Minors have to be protected from this dirty political contamination!

CORRUPTION AND LACK OF TRANSPARENCY OF THE INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

We alert the public and demand a stop to the corruptive practices and lack of transparency of the institutions, especially in regards to the financing of the political parties. The public has the right to know how the political parties are financed, the amount of funds they have at their disposal for the campaign, where these funds come from, and how they are spent! On July 19, CIVIL sent a letter to 70 political parties requesting that they provide basic data on the financing of the parties and their plans on financing their political activities and election campaigns. Only five political parties have responded to this request until now: The Left, the Liberal Party of Macedonia (LPM), Democratic Renewal of Macedonia (DOM), People's Movement of Macedonia (NDM) and the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM).

CIVIL will send one more request on the financing of election campaigns of political parties. We will make use of all legal mechanisms to force political parties to report.

Corruption and lack of transparency in the election process is a serious problem that we will discuss at tomorrow's debate on "Challenges before the election process", which will be held in Hotel City Park tomorrow, starting at 12pm, and we will schedule the next press conference precisely in front of the State Commission for Preventing Corruption, with new findings in this field.

This is not all. CIVIL disposes with vast material that has been collected from reports of the long-term and mobile observers, from reports of citizens, as well as from citizen journalists from around the country. I would like to use this opportunity to thank everyone for the support and trust they continuously provide us with in every aspect.

CITIZENS, DO
NOT BE AFRAID
TO VOTE!



CIVIL Press Conference in front of SEC, 9 December, 2016

CITIZENS, DO NOT BE AFRAID TO VOTE!

Macedonia is welcoming the elections with a complete disaster in the Voters Register. Following all field and cross checks, “phantoms” still figure on the Voters Register, whereby the chaos is accompanied with mass disappearance of citizens who until now were not disputable and still existed in the list until it was closed. They have been living on the same address and voting at the same voting station for years.

In the period December 5 – December 8 alone, CIVIL received over 600 calls from citizens, worried whether they would have the opportunity to use their right to vote at the early parliamentary elections!

CIVIL is demanding responsibility from the State Election Commission (SEC) in regards to the missing voters who, simply with no fault of theirs, have “disappeared” from the Voters Register, more precisely, they have been deleted and brought to a situation of not being able to realize their constitutionally guaranteed right to vote.

The chaos in the electronic list of voters and the partisanship of the SEC, must not be a reason for yet another election manipulation with the will of the citizens.

CIVIL is demanding from the SEC and the Municipal Election Commissions and Election Boards to allow all voters with valid documents to vote. CIVIL is sending an open message to the Election Boards, Municipal Election Commissions and to the SEC – for them to strictly adhere to and implement the laws and electoral procedures, and to appropriately inform the voters, especially if they have “disappeared” from the lists.

If members of the Election Boards determine that a voter does not figure in the Voters Register, then they have to refer that person to the regional office of the SEC, in order to check the website www.izbirackispisok.gov.mk if that person is registered in the Voters Register, and in which voting station he/she can vote. To enable those having valid documents, but who have been completely deleted, to vote accordingly with a maximally broad interpretation of the Electoral Code.

CIVIL is once again emphasizing that it is strictly forbidden to blackmail or intimidate voters. Unfortunately, pressures have continued on voters, even to the last day of the campaign!

Since the beginning of the second week of the election campaign, CIVIL has received over 100 reports from all over the Republic of Macedonia. In total, in the period from November 21 to December 8, CIVIL received more than 170 cases of pressures, threats, abuses and other categories of irregularities, not counting the reports concerning the problems with the Voters Register.

CIVIL demands an immediate stop to the intimidations, blackmail, pressures and vote buying. CIVIL guarantees anonymity to all citizens who will report irregularities, and encourages them to immediately report any irregularities and abuses. We urge voters to freely go out to vote at the elections on December 11, because no one can violate or usurp their right – to freely express their will on who should lead Macedonia in the following period.

CIVIL is urging political parties to respect the laws and the rules for fair and democratic, free elections. We ask all participants in the election process to help for the elections to be carried out in a peaceful and in a democratic atmosphere, without violence!

We demand for the electoral silence to be respected, and for the media on Election Day to report – with no favoring, correctly and objectively. We especially urge for there to be no hate speech or calls for violence.

CIVIL is also calling for observers to perform their duties correctly and to inform the Macedonian public about any irregularities noticed and violation of the rights of voters.

In order to enable all citizens to realize their voting right, CIVIL urges employers to allow

their employees working on Sunday to get out from work to go to vote, and requests the election boards to ease the access for people with disabilities to the voting stations.

Taking into consideration the lack of transparency in the financing of the campaigns of the political parties, CIVIL urges for complete and detailed financial reports to be made available to the public, and implementation of real supervision, in order to have knowledge on the sources of financing of the political parties, the amounts and on what those funds have been spent.

The public has the right to know!

The state has the obligation to respect and protect the right to vote!

Those who are responsible for election irregularities and impeding the election process need to be held responsible!

Note: Following the press-conference in front of the State Election Commission, representatives of CIVIL tried to submit documented cases of "missing" persons in the Voters Register to a relevant representative of the SEC. To our great and unpleasant surprise, we realized that in the SEC there was practically no one who could receive the material that CIVIL's team prepared, in an effort to help at least a hundred of citizens to realize their right. There was no one in the SEC.



ст. 6р.13

A PEACEFUL, BUT
TENSE VOTING
DAY, FILLED WITH
NUMEROUS
IRREGULARITIES

Име и презиме: **Илија Илиќ**
Адреса: **Улица Бр. 1 Прилеп**
Контакт телефон: **075/**
Општински комитет **Прилеп**
Број на избирачко место **1351**

Jas sum odgovoren za izleznosta na glasawe do 12:00 часот за slednite 15 lica:

бр.	Име и презиме	Адреса (улица и број и општина)	Телефон (фиксен и мобилен)	Општински комитет	Број на избирачко место
1.			048	Прилеп	1381
2.			076	Прилеп	1351
3.			076	Прилеп	1351
4.			048	Прилеп	1381
5.			076	Прилеп	1351
6.			048	Прилеп	1414
7.			048	Прилеп	1414
8.			048	Прилеп	1414
9.			048	Прилеп	1414
10.			048	Прилеп	1410
11.			048	Прилеп	1410
12.			048	Прилеп	1410
13.			048	Прилеп	1410
14.			048	Прилеп	1397
15.			048	Прилеп	1397
16.					
17.					
18.					
19.					
20.					
21.					
22.					
23.					
24.					
25.					
26.					
27.					
28.					
29.					
30.					

List of „secured voters“

A PEACEFUL, BUT TENSE VOTING DAY, FILLED WITH NUMEROUS IRREGULARITIES

XHABIR DERALLA
IN COOPERATION WITH CIVIL TEAMS

On Election Day, December 11, 2016, CIVIL-Macedonia deployed 300 short-term election observers, who joined our 35 long-term observers already in the field, to inspect polling sites, monitor the activities of political parties and election officials, and record the complaints of any voters who experienced trouble voting or who had witnessed irregularities and abuses. During that time, CIVIL also kept its phone lines open for any citizens experiencing problems voting, or who had witnessed irregularities at the ballot box. We received over 1,000 calls on Election Day alone.

Over 700 reports of election irregularities arrived in CIVIL's analytical center during the day of voting on December 11, 2016. The reports are divided in the following categories:

1. Unlawful action and violation of election procedures
2. Problems with the Voters Register
3. Violation of secrecy of voting
4. Vote buying
5. Violation of election silence
6. Abuse of minors
7. Threats, abuses, pressures and blackmail
8. Voter obstruction
9. Family and proxy voting
10. Police – overstepping and abuse
11. Obstructing the work of observers
12. Violence
13. Armed violence
14. Other irregularities

The reported cases of election irregularities often also refer to other categories of irregularities and forms of violation to the Electoral Code, violation of other laws and violation of the right to vote, as well as other human rights and freedoms. In the process of categorizing the irregularities, consideration was given as to which dimension is dominant in the specific case, or the category from which the entire case arises from.

All the reports from the observers on the day of the elections were subjected to verification through individual conversations with some of the observers, verification of applications through special monitoring teams, or by comparisons with reports of observers with other information from the ground, such as phone calls or online commu-

nications from citizens, information from citizen journalists and from CIVIL's research team that was constantly on the ground.

The observers began their work on Election Day at 6:00am and ended it with the completion of the counting and handing over of the election material to the municipal election commissions.

CIVIL promoted the principle ZERO TOLERANCE FOR ELECTION IRREGULARITIES during the pre-election period, and requested that its observers note even the slightest irregularities during the voting on Election Day. However, it became clear at the very start of the Election Day on December 11, 2016 that there would be many irregularities. Therefore, this report deals only with information and reports that according to CIVIL are more serious and unacceptable for an election process in a democratic country and contender for EU membership. CIVIL's team also made an additional, more narrow selection of the election irregularities, with the purpose of illustrating the situation with fraudulent practices and procedures during the elections, in order to give the Report clarity and practical applicability.

In this chapter of the Report, we will list the most typical irregularities, according to the stated categories.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

All reports that have been processed and approved by CIVIL's analytical center, contain a series of information, among which: the exact location of the event that has been reported, the number of polling station, and the name of the observer reporting the irregularities.

Many reports contain names, descriptions, and some also audio, video and photographic records of those conducting the actions, of witnesses, along with names of representatives of the organs and bodies of the SEC, where it is relevant for the report.

CIVIL's observers were strictly forbidden to record or take pictures inside the polling stations.

1. UNLAWFUL ACTION AND VIOLATION OF ELECTION PROCEDURES

On Election Day, CIVIL's analytical team processed and approved 196 reports on unlawful action and violation of election procedures. These reports primarily concern the work of officials representing state institutions, namely, the bodies of the State Election Commission (SEC).

In most cases, the unlawful actions reported were the acts of individuals – members of the electoral boards – but in many cases our reports contain violations of election procedures by the entire electoral board.

In general, a low level of knowledge on the procedures and lack of information on the competencies, obligations and responsibilities can be noticed among members of the electoral boards. This problem is widespread and was quite visible on the day of the voting; if the reporting were to also include the lack of knowledge and unintentional errors made by the members of the electoral boards, then this Report would have certainly had three times more registered irregularities in this category.

Often, the election irregularities that are caused by unlawful action and violation of the election procedures by the electoral boards or representatives of other institutions and bodies of the SEC, are accompanied with other forms of irregularities, but are put in this category because they usually occur inside the polling station.

The electoral boards engaged in violation of the election silence period by openly agitating in favor of the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE and their coalition partners, with the exception of one case of agitation in favor of SDSM. Our reports also note dozens of cases in which electoral boards do not act to prohibit agitations by party activists inside the polling stations; ignore instances of public voting, where voters loudly stated who they voted for or showed the voting ballot to the persons present at the polling station.

The members of the electoral boards present at polling stations also reportedly ignored cases when the privacy of voters was violated by party representatives and other individuals openly pressuring them to cast their ballots a certain way. Several times, our observers brought such behavior to the attention of the relevant election

officials, who continuously refused to intervene or to make record of the incidents. Electoral boards ignoring indications of irregularities or violation of the procedures are noted in over 50 cases in the reports of CIVIL's observers.

In one case, a member of an electoral board in the Municipality of Aerodrom was visibly marked with party symbols of the ruling party and refused suggestions to take the symbols off of him for a long time.

Electoral boards not only refused to assist several voters in the Municipality of Aerodrom who had been removed from the Voters Register in the last several days before election day, but additionally obstructed their voting by marking the voters with spray to indicate that they had voted before informing them that they were not on the Voters Register. Because they had been marked with spray, they could not vote anywhere else, regardless of the fact that they had been referred to other polling stations.

Electoral boards also helped the ruling party oversee the control and mobilization of voters, by openly communicating with party headquarters throughout the day in numerous polling stations, and allowed party observers, especially of the ruling parties, to examine the material of the Voters Register.

The members of the electoral boards also tolerated family and proxy voting, and did not intervene when assistance during voting violated the procedures. There have also been cases where the president or members of the electoral board suggest voters to circle number 1 (VMRO-DPMNE). In the Municipality of Karpos, for example, members of the electoral board openly asked voters who they would vote for.

The members of the electoral board also did not prohibit the taking of photos inside the polling stations in at least three cases, and in one case in Bitola, the members of the electoral board took pictures of themselves, inside the polling station. In the same municipality, at another polling station, a member of the electoral board watched over individual voters as they were voting, thus violating the principle of secrecy of voting.

The electoral boards did not act to restore order when crowds disrupted or threatened to disrupt voting in a dozen polling stations, despite the clear legal powers that enable them to do so. Our monitors also noted incidences when members of the Electoral

Board read the full names of voters out loud, for all to hear.

Members of the electoral boards, although responsible for organizing the polling station and the election material, including the ballot boxes, were often careless. Unsealed ballot boxes were noted in many cases across Macedonia. They were sealed only upon the insisting of observers, one of which came from an international observation mission.

Electoral boards are implementing the vote counting in a very suspicious and inconsistent manner. For example, in proclaiming the ballots as invalid, electoral boards did not consistently abide by the Electoral Code and decided differently in regards to how the number before the candidate was circled. In more than 50 cases, ballots in which the will of the voters is clearly expressed were determined to be invalid, especially when number 4 (SDSM) is circled. Ballots circled in the same way in the Municipality of Aerodrom and in Tetovo, were treated differently. While in Aerodrom they were declared invalid, the same were treated as valid in Tetovo.

A case is noted where an electoral board in a polling station in the Municipality of Kisela Voda, according to an observer's report, allowed a person who was not on the Voters Register to vote. In Saraj, on the other hand, the electoral board allowed a citizen to vote in place of his brother who lives abroad.

In a case noted in the report of an observer from Kumanovo, a member of the electoral board, otherwise a member of DUI, was at the same time also an election observer representing that party.

In several other dozens of cases, observers note that the electoral board is not complete, or that one member of that body is almost never there.

In many cases, electoral boards were seen acting arrogantly towards observers, provoking and pressuring them. In one polling station in the Municipality of Butel, the electoral board simply expelled CIVIL's observer, without any explanation, immediately after he had identified himself.

In two cases, extremely improper behavior by the electoral board is noted. Our teams observed the consumption of alcohol and food in three polling locations, including by

observers of other organizations and official party observers.

Most members of the electoral boards reportedly did not wear badges, did not know the procedures, and sometimes made unintentional oversights and errors. However, minor violations of the procedures were so regular and numerous that these cases are not included in the statistics of this Report, as the number of such cases in this category would have been incomparably higher.

Unlawful action and violation of election procedures is noted in: Aerodrom (15 cases), Berovo (2), Bitola (17), Butel (3), Valandovo (1), Veles (1), Gazi Baba (7), Gevgelia (3), Gjorce Petrov (4), Gostivar (1), Delcevo (3), Demir Hisar (15), Kavadarci (3), Karpos (7), Kisela Voda (6), Kicevo (4), Kocani (4), Kriva Palanka (1), Krusevo (3), Kumanovo (4), Lipkovo (5), Mavrovo – Rostusa (1), Mogila (2), Ohrid (3), Petrovec (1), Prilep (18), Probistip (1), Radovis (1), Saraj (8), Sveti Nikole (3), Struga (1), Tearce (1), Tetovo (9), Centar (8), Cair (12) and Suto Orizari (18).

2. PROBLEMS WITH THE VOTERS REGISTER

CIVIL has presented to the public dozens of announcements and a range of information published on the organization's websites and on the social networks, with numerous statements for the media and press-conferences on this topic. There have also been many attempts to contact the State Election Commission (SEC) in an official manner in writing and with many phone calls, with the intention of helping in the efforts of ensuring free elections and respect for the right to vote of all citizens. This has also meant supporting in the process of revising and clearing the Voters Register, which CIVIL anticipated could be a significant tool in ensuring the right to vote and one of the most important conditions for holding free elections.

Unfortunately, this did not happen.

In 83 processed and approved reports of CIVIL's observers, there are testimonies of hundreds of cases in which citizens could not exercise their right to vote because they had been removed from the Voters Register in the last several days prior to Election Day on December 11, 2016.

There are also cases where some voters were found in the separate list of persons who have moved out of the country, but rarely did the members of the electoral boards think of searching there.

In most of the cases, voters simply could not exercise their right, not even after having reacted to the municipal election commissions. There they were unable to help them, because the State Election Commission had no system of protecting the rights of the voters, or of correcting the injustice that had been inflicted upon them as a result of the chaos in the Voters Register, as CIVIL called it in communication with the public.

In the reports of CIVIL's observers there were also numerous cases where deceased people were included in the Voters Register along with many phantom voters, that is, people not living on those addresses.

Phantom voters were especially popular during the electoral processes in 2013 and 2014, and it has become apparent that a huge number of phantom voters figured in the Voters Register also on the day of the elections on December 11, 2016. Practically speaking, deceased persons and fictitious persons were able to vote, whereas living people were disabled from doing so.

In three separate cases, in the reports of CIVIL's observers there are serious concerns that deceased people and phantoms had "voted". This information, according to the observers, is supported by anonymous information coming from relevant sources, including members of electoral boards.

Reports on problems with the Voters Register come from the following municipalities: Aerodrom (17), Aracinovo (1), Bitola (13), Butel (7), Valandovo (2), Veles (2), Gazi Baba (9), Gjorce Petrov (4), Gostivar (2), Demir Hisar (6), Karpos (3), Kisela Voda (2), Kicevo (1), Krusevo (3), Kumanovo (8), Makedonski Brod (1), Ohrid (6), Prilep (11), Probistip (1), Radovis (2), Resen (2), Saraj (3).

In each of the reports there are a large number of cases, that is, violations of the right to vote in this category.

It is important to note that during Election Day as well, around a thousand citizens called CIVIL to report irregularities in the voting process, out of which almost two thirds were in relation to problems concerning the Voters Register.

CIVIL's teams are treating this subject with particular attention in other parts of this Report also, as well as on the organization's online channels.

3. VIOLATION OF THE SECRECY OF VOTING

Violation of the secrecy of voting is strictly forbidden by law. This also refers to taking photos inside the polling station, and especially taking photos of the ballot, a prohibition that acts as an additional layer of protection for voters who may later face pressure by party members and others to prove they voted for the "correct" party.

CIVIL's observers submitted 30 reports containing numerous cases of violation of the secrecy of voting

Within the framework of this category, there are 18 cases of photographing the ballot in the following municipalities: Bitola (1 case), Butel (1), Veles (1), Vrapciste (1), Gevgelia (1), Zelenikovo (1), Karpos (2 cases), Krusevo (1), Kumanovo (2), Prilep (3), Centar (2) and Cair (2).

In five out of 18 cases of photographing the ballot, there are no reactions from the Electoral Board, while in 13 cases there is a reaction from the Electoral Board, and in almost half of the cases our observers also inform on a timely police intervention, as well as on the correct response of members of electoral boards at these polling stations.

In the remaining cases within the framework of the category Violation of the secrecy of voting, the issues are mainly in relation to public voting, accompanied by agitation, or violation of the election silence, as well as in terms of suggesting out loud and directing voters in the need of assistance who to vote for.

According to reports, the screens behind which the voting took place, had been arranged in such a way that it could be easily seen who the voters were voting for, and

in two cases there had been screens whose front sides had been damaged. In most cases, upon indications made by CIVIL, efforts were made to correct the flaw.

Recording and taking photos was also noted in two polling stations, in a way that could have compromised the secrecy of voting, could have allowed pressure and taking record of citizens.

In addition to the cases involving photographing of ballots, CIVIL's observers also note other irregularities within the framework of this category in the following municipalities: Gevgelia (1), Gostivar (1), Demir Hisar (2 cases), Kisela Voda (2), Kicevo (1), Kriva Palanka (1), Ohrid (1), Prilep (5 cases) and Struga (1).

4. VOTE BUYING

Vote buying on the day of the elections, and during the period of pre-election silence the day before that, is one of the most severe forms of electoral irregularities, but also a great challenge for observers.

In the vote buying party activists are involved as well as public administration employees and high-ranking government representatives at the local level. This operation, obviously, was in place for quite some time before Election Day, but in this part of CIVIL's Report only cases registered on the day of the voting on December 11 are treated.

During the election silence, on the day before the voting, CIVIL's observers registered 11 cases of vote buying in Bitola, Veles, Demir Hisar, several municipalities in Skopje and in Resen. In these five cases, CIVIL notes the intervention also of police.

Vote buying, according to the 12 processed reports from election day, is noted in the following municipalities: Berovo (1), Bitola (2 cases), Veles (2), Prilep (2), Resen (1), Sveti Nikole (1), Staro Nagoricane (1), Struga (1) and Stip (1).

Observers also submitted recorded material and photos, video and audio formats with testimonies of people insisting on staying anonymous.

5.VIOLATION OF ELECTION SILENCE

Although violation of election silence is strictly forbidden and punishable, it is as if it did not even exist during the election silence period, on the day before and during the voting on December 11.

Our monitors reported violations of election silence practically everywhere in the country, and it is most often a component found in all other categories of irregularities, as a second or third irregularity in almost all of the reports of CIVIL's observers. For example, in most of the reports in the category Unlawful action and violation of election procedures there are testimonies in regards to violation of the election silence, precisely by electoral boards, party observers, and in some cases election silence is also violated by observers of non-party (non-governmental) organizations. That is why this part of CIVIL's Report should be treated as a supplement in terms of specially processed reports in this category of election irregularities, so that they may serve as an illustration of the rude and ruthless violation of the laws and democratic standards.

This has to be treated in the post-election period and a solution has to be found for the extremely low political culture and inclination to lawlessness by practically all participants in the electoral process.

Party activists, and even high government representatives, in the role of party observers, openly agitated during the election silence period, including inside of polling stations. Hence, an observer of VMRO-DPMNE stood at the door of a polling station in Prilep and told people who were entering to circle 1 (VMRO-DPMNE).

Furthermore, in Bitola, near the center for Social Work, party activists of VMRO-DPMNE were divided into two groups. One group was openly stopping those passing by and agitating, while the other group was giving out sandwiches.

Observers of VMRO-DPMNE in a polling station in the Municipality of Karpos were asking everyone entering the place who they would vote for, or simply addressed them with the words: "Vote for Macedonia!".

The violation of election silence goes so far as to have a crowd of VMRO-DPMNE activists in front of a polling station in Prilep chanting political slogans.

An observer of a non-governmental organization agitated in front of a polling station in Radovis. Other such cases are noted in Stip, Veles and Skopje.

As in the reports in other categories, where violation of the election silence was an accompanying component of the dominant form of election irregularities, in this category as well, CIVIL's observers note disproportionately larger violations by the ruling VMRO-DPMNE and their coalition partners, primarily, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) in municipalities where Albanians live, along with the Union of Roma in Macedonia (URM) in municipalities where Roma live.

There were three cases of violations of the election silence by party activists of SDSM, in the municipality of Karpos (Skopje), Kumanovo and Strumica.

From among other irregularities in this category, several dozens of cases can be pointed out where the propaganda material was not removed from the polling stations or from their immediate surrounding. This is an accompanying element in many other reports from the ground as well, but it is treated as an accompanying irregularity.

In this category there are 39 reports, although, as it has also been mentioned above, violation of the election silence is massive and continuous throughout Macedonia. Reports from the ground on violation of the election silence that have been underlined refer to the following municipalities: Berovo (1 report), Bitola (2), Veles (1), Gostivar (1), Demir Hisar (6), Karpos (3), Kicevo (1), Kocani (1), Kumanovo (1), Lipkovo (1), Lozovo (1), Prilep (3), Probistip (1), Radovis (1), Strumica (2), Centar (3), Cair (3), Cucer Sandevo (1) and Suto Orizari (6 reports).

6. ABUSE OF MINORS

The abuse of children and minors is a feature of all election processes in the Republic of Macedonia and was present in the December 11 elections as well. CIVIL strongly and categorically condemns political abuse of minors during the election campaign and has expressed strong public criticism at press conferences and on the day of the voting.

On the day of the voting on December 11, not as many cases of abuse of minors were noted as in the pre-election period, when CIVIL published a dozen cases of abuse throughout the entire country. This report incorporates these abuses as well.

The abuse of minors in Suto Orizari was characteristic, where a group of minors were noted in six cases chanting and participating in propaganda and violation of the election silence near the polling stations in this municipality.

7. THREATS, ABUSES, PRESSURES AND BLACKMAIL

Voters were under constant pressure during the entire period, long before the official start of the election campaign. CIVIL has continuously published reports and analysis on numerous cases that in this Report fit into one category: Threats, abuses, pressures and blackmail. It is a matter of complex cases of serious violation of human rights and freedoms in the electoral context. With no exception, all cases speak of the effects of the long-lasting structural violence and political corruption on a broad scale.

The violations and unlawful actions and practices of the institutions and of other power structures point to participation of many different entities and represent a mix of circumstances created or caused by such practices. That is why this category incorporates several elements: threats, abuses, pressures and blackmail.

Voters found themselves under pressure from the early morning hours of Election Day. Many of them were already featured on the party lists of “sure voters” and, as such, received phone calls from party headquarters to go and vote.

Party activists also waited for them in vehicles to transport them, or waited for them in front of polling stations in which party activists with lists in their hands cautiously recorded all those who had voted.

Often, party soldiers could be seen in front of the polling stations, usually employed in the public administration, greeting them and in a “friendly” manner reminding them “who to vote for”. There are cases when the organized transportation was carried out by employees in the public administration with official vehicles. In several cases, the

vehicles that are used to “control the turnout”, do not have license plates. In several cases, it was noted that members of the special police unit “Alpha” engaged in the “mobilization” of voters.

In one case, two people literally walked a voter to a polling station in the municipality of Bitola and told him how to vote. The members of the electoral board who were present at the time did not intervene.

This category is present as an element in almost all the other categories, especially in the following categories: Unlawful action and violation of election procedures; Violation of secrecy of voting, which is a result of the pressure on voters to photograph the ballot or to vote publically; Vote buying is mostly carried out by employees in the public administration, even by government officials at the local level; Violation of election silence; Voter obstruction, in cases when voters who would vote “for the opponent” are impeded in exercising their right to vote; Police – overstepping and abuse...

Voters who photograph their ballot because they have to – are forced to prove that they voted for the ruling party that convinced them that they are obliged to vote for it. Otherwise, they are under threat of losing their job, social welfare, health care services or some other “generous service” of the administration.

On Election Day, 55 cases of various forms of threats, abuses, pressures and blackmail were noted in the municipalities: Aerodrom (3 cases), Berovo (1), Bitola (3), Butel (1), Gazi Baba (5), Gevgelia (1), Gostivar (1), Delcevo (2), Demir Hisar (2), Zelenikovo (1), Kavadarci (1), Karpos (3), Kisela Voda (4), Kicevo (1), Krusevo (2), Lozovo (2), Prilep (6), Radovis (3), Resen (1), Saraj (2), Sveti Nikole (5).

8. VOTER OBSTRUCTION

Voter obstruction usually means that party activists are trying to prevent voting by people who they assume will vote for the opponent. These activities are usually preceded by arrangements and preparation of a list of voters that have been determined to be “unsuitable”, or members or supporters of another party. This category is most often associated also with the category Vote buying and Violation of the election silence.

Hence, in the municipality of Lozovo, two groups of VMRO-DPMNE activists were observed, one of which was located in front of the polling station agitating, while the other one was in a vehicle from which activists come out at times and stop voters who they assume will vote for the opposition. In this report, CIVIL's observers describe the situation with the words "unbelievable pressure" ...A similar description of the atmosphere is noted

in the reports coming from the municipality of Prilep, but also from smaller and rural municipalities across Macedonia.

Voter obstruction is noted in 32 cases in the municipalities: Bitola (3 cases), Butel (2), Gazi Baba (4), Delcevo (1), Zelenikovo (1), Kicevo (1), Lozovo (2), Prilep (8), Resen (2), Struga (2), Strumica (1), Centar (1), Cesinovo-Oblesevo (1) and Suto Orizari (2 cases).

9. FAMILY AND PROXY VOTING

A person with disabilities arrives at a polling station in Probistip, accompanied by his parent, who behind the screen goes to vote by himself on behalf of the person with disabilities, without consulting anyone. The parent then gives the ballot to the person with disabilities, who says "I am afraid" while he puts the ballot in the box – is said in the report of CIVIL's observer from Probistip.

At a polling station in Demir Hisar, when an observer of CIVIL indicated a case of proxy voting, members of the Electoral Board responded with the words: "Please, we all know each other here!".

Moreover, in Saraj, the electoral board allowed a person to vote for five people – for himself, his brother, his mother, who he claimed could not see well, and for two more people who were not even related to him.

CIVIL's observers submitted 78 reports with at least one case of family or group voting, for the following municipalities: Aerodrom (1 case), Aracinovo (2), Berovo (1), Bitola (5), Butel (4), Veles (4), Vrapciste (1), Gazi Baba (8), Gevgelia (2), Delcevo (1), Demir Hisar (3), Kavadarci (2), Karpos (1), Kisela Voda (3), Kicevo (1), Krusevo (1),

Lipkovo (1), Lozovo (1), Ohrid (2), Prilep (6), Probistip (2), Saraj (5), Struga (1), Strumica (1), Tetovo (3), Centar (1), Cair (3), Cesinovo-Oblesevo (1), Suto Orizari (9 reports).

10. POLICE OVERSTEPPING AND ABUSES

Во оваа категорија, за разлика од низа претходни изборни процеси, полицијата In this category, unlike so many previous election cycles, the police displayed high level of professionalism. Still, there are two reports in which irregularities involving the police are noted. Moreover, in one case a symptomatic situation is noted when voters in Prilep are issued ID cards on the very day of the voting in an unusually large number.

In the Municipality of Cesinovo-Oblesevo a case of selective intervention by the police is noted in the election headquarters of SDSM, for which there is already a report for violation of the election silence. SDSM's election headquarters were temporarily closed and reopened after the propaganda material had been removed.

However, the same irregularity was noticed also in VMRO-DPMNE's election headquarters, where the police did not react.

In the Municipality of Demir Hisar, police officers were performing control and taking record of voters for the needs of the local branch of VMRO-DPMNE.

11. OBSTRUCTING THE WORK OF THE OBSERVERS

CIVIL notes a record number of cases of obstructions to the work of CIVIL's observers during the day of the voting, compared to previous election processes, which is a specific indicator of the state and of the quality of the election process. Most of the obstruction cases come precisely from representatives of the State Election Commission bodies, in particular, from members of electoral boards, but some of the reports speak about the unacceptable behavior of activists of the ruling parties which, in several cases, made strong pressure on our observers. In three cases it also concerns death threats for our observers. In one case, our observer was unlawfully detained by VMRO-DPMNE activists, and was released only upon a police intervention. In another case, our observer was forced to

seek police intervention, as there had been an obvious intention for physical assault, and after that there had been threats and following of that person.

Furthermore, there are cases in which members of electoral boards acted unlawfully towards CIVIL's observers, keeping their authorizations or in some other way impeding their work, and not to mention the rude and provocative comments, provoking questions that are against the procedures and authorizations of the electoral boards.

That is not acceptable! CIVIL came out with public calls for the institutions to protect the right of the accredited observers to carry out their work in an unhindered manner during the day of the voting and once again, in this Report, demands a stop to such practice.

Obstructions to the work of CIVIL's observers are noted in 21 reports in the following municipalities: Bitola (2 cases), Valandovo (1), Gazi Baba (2), Gevgelia (2), Gostivar (1), Demir Hisar (1), Kavadarci (1), Krusevo (1), Kumanovo (1), Ohrid (1), Prilep (2), Probistip (1), Saraj (3), Strumica (1) and Stip (1).

12. VIOLENCE

The general conclusion and assessment of domestic and foreign observation missions is that the election day was calm and without violence. CIVIL joins this general assessment, but not entirely.

Nine cases of violence have been registered during the day of the voting, in the municipalities: Bitola (2 cases), Valandovo (1), Veles (1), Kavadarci (1), Kicevo (2), Resen (1) and Saraj (1).

There was an unusual case noted by an observer of CIVIL, who reports that a person with mild developmental disability had been locked up in a garage so as to be prevented from going out to vote. The police intervened after CIVIL's observer had reported the case.

13. ARMED VIOLENCE

CIVIL does not register any cases of armed violence during the day of the voting. However, celebratory gunfire is noted in 27 cases throughout the entire country, including most of the municipalities in the City of Skopje as well.

14. OTHER IRREGULARITIES

This category includes 43 cases concerning irregularities or situations that do not belong in any of the previously stated categories, or are a combination of several categories of irregularities.

In this category it is important to note that a large number of polling stations are inaccessible to people with disabilities. This situation is also noted in many previous election cycles and arouse concern and discontent among many citizens, as well as observation missions from the country and abroad.

The SEC has to ensure that the polling stations are accessible to all voters.

This category also includes the extremely poor working conditions of the electoral boards in a dozen buildings in which voting took place. In two cases, citizens organized themselves to bring heaters to the polling stations where members of the electoral boards were freezing.

The SEC should provide decent working conditions at all polling stations in the country.

In two reports of CIVIL's observers in Resen, voters from Pustec, Albania who are not residents of the municipality have been noted. They did not know where they were supposed to vote and went around from one polling station to another. Our observers witnessed part of the voting. In this municipality a vehicle was also noticed with Skopje license plates that was used to transport voters from Pustec, Albania.

An unknown person stole a ballot and ran away, so the polling station had to be temporarily closed. We do not know the ending to this case.

The names of the observers of non-governmental organizations are usually not recorded in the minutes of the electoral boards, and often neither are the names of party observers.

*

This report is a summary of the enormous material that the analytical team of CIVIL collected during the day of the voting. The sources, photos, video and audio recordings, minutes of the electoral boards and many other materials are all part of CIVIL's protected archive, which will serve the organization for further research, formulating of strategies and methodologies for monitoring and recommendations for reforms in the country.

REVOTE IN
TEARCE: A
SMALL
ILLUSTRATION
OF MAJOR
PROBLEMS



Tearce, December 25, 2016

REVOTE IN TEARCE: A SMALL ILLUSTRATION OF MAJOR PROBLEMS

The election rerun in polling station 2011 in Tearce on December 25, 2016 represents a small illustration and a troublesome reminder of the immense problems with the election process in Republic of Macedonia. It concerns one polling station with 714 registered voters, in a small, ethnically mixed rural municipality, for which the Administrative Court decided that the voting should be repeated, following the complaint and appeal of the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM).

This small place could have made a big difference in the outcome of the difficult election struggle that took place on December 11. In the sixth electoral unit, the difference between the rival coalition led by the ruling VMRO-DPMNE and the oppositional SDSM was 303, or with the repeated voting 207 voted in favor of the ruling party. That is why Tearce was so important for the two fiercely opposed parties. A win with a difference of more than 303 votes in favor of SDSM would have meant equaling of the number of parliamentary seats won from the current 51:49 in favor of VMRO-DPMNE to a completely equal number of MP's, 50:50.

WHAT HAPPENED IN TEARCE?

Briefly, the rerun in Tearce was almost like an ordered demonstration on how not to conduct elections.

CIVIL – Center for Freedom, whose long-term observers are in the phase of post-electoral monitoring of the situation, assigned observers immediately after the decision of the Administrative Court for an election rerun in polling station 2011, on December 20. The parties had only three days to prepare and additionally promote their programs, taking in consideration that election silence starts the day before the voting.

As expected, during the very first day following the decision of the Administrative Court, CIVIL's observers came to the first information that strong electoral pressure had begun on voters.

They noted many irregularities also during the rerun in Tearce on December 25, which correspond to the nature of the irregularities registered also during the election process that ended with the day of the voting on December 11.

According to reports from the ground, in the four days prior to the rerun there had been vote buying, which is supported by testimonials of witnesses.

The voters were asked not to vote, and in return they were offered high amounts, whereby they had to hand over their ID cards to be “kept” until the day after the rerun in order to reduce the turnout of voters who assumingly would vote for the opposition. The price for refraining to vote had ranged from 50 to 100 euros per voter, or it reached amounts from 500 to 1,000 euros per family. Others received financial “rewards” for a vote for one or another political party.

Despite the attempts of certain media to disqualify CIVIL's information on the cases of vote buying, finally, these cases were also confirmed with MOI's announcement on the day of the election rerun, according to which a procedure has been initiated against two persons for this act of crime.

Observers of CIVIL – Center for Freedom also came across unofficial information that around 40 ID cards of voters in Tearce had been given back to the voters during the day of the election rerun.

As to the election silence, it was as if it did not exist at all. Just like during the election silence with the voting on December 11, in this small settlement as well, it was even more obvious that the election silence was not respected. Party activists of all political parties, without any reservations, were agitating during the election silence.

CIVIL's observers were monitoring the rerun at polling station 2011 in Tearce from 6:30h. The election material at the polling station had not been organized on time, though it had been complete. Voting had been enabled several minutes after 7:00

The UV lamps had stopped working. The first stopped working at 8:30h in the morning, and the second one stopped working at 8:55h, and at 9:05 it was determined that they were working after all. Eight or more voters had been turned back from the polling station in the period while the UV lamps were supposedly not working. It is strange how precisely these two lamps were not working on that day. It is just one polling station!

According to the reports of the observers of CIVIL – Center for Freedom, members of the Electoral Board had constantly been on their telephones. When there were no voters at the polling station, they had been continuously going through and checking the Voters Register, after which they had been making telephone calls, probably, to inform the party headquarters for which they work for on the turnout of the voters who were under control.

CIVIL publically reminded the members of the Electoral Board that sharing information with party headquarters and mobilization of voters is against the law and election procedures, but without any success.

The Electoral Board might have not functioned according to the law entirely, but it did strictly abide to the rules they made up themselves. So, the Electoral Board asked for and retained the authorizations of CIVIL's observers, which is against the procedure. During the counting of votes, a member of the Electoral Board had lit a cigarette after which everyone had started smoking in the room, making another member feel sick, which followed with a medical intervention.

There was strong presence of the police, the media and civil society representatives, domestic and foreign observation missions, along with many senior party representatives.

The communication between the Electoral Board and journalist teams at times was with a high tone, while cameramen and photo reporters were photographing and recording

literally all voters separately. According to CIVIL's observers, several citizens had complained of feeling uncomfortable under such media attention.

A member of the Electoral Board had addressed the journalists with a high tone and expelled them from the polling station, even though it seems that the same did not apply to one television station with a national concession.

A person without accreditation had entered the polling station and recorded without authorization, after which was asked to stop with the recording, but this was not registered in the records despite the indications made by CIVIL's observer.

The Electoral Board was unable to help a voter that could not be found on the Voters Register, even though previously he had figured on the online version.

Increased presence of police forces was noticed in Tearce, where there was an election rerun in polling station 2011. The police behaved professionally and in correctly, whereas the increased presence was with the purpose of ensuring the right to vote and the legality of the process.

CHAOS: VOTERS
REGISTER AND
STATE ELECTION
COMMISSION



CIVIL Press Conference in front of SEC, December 9, 2016

CHAOS: VOTERS REGISTER AND STATE ELECTION COMMISSION

BILJANA JORDANOVSKA

According to the report of the State Election Commission (SEC) on the parliamentary elections to be held on December 11, 2016, in the second chapter entitled “Record of the voting right”, a total of 1,784,416 voters had the right to vote in that election, including:

- 1,531,368 voters registered in the Voters Register, who would be voting at polling locations in Macedonia
- 230,122 voters registered in the separate Voters Register for people temporarily working and living abroad, but who have not applied in the diplomatic and consular missions
- 20,573 voters registered in a separate list of the Voters Register for voting abroad, who would vote at Macedonian diplomatic and consular missions in the countries where they reside

- 2,015 voters registered in separate lists of the Voters Register for voting in penitentiaries
- 325 voters, members and deputy-members abroad
- 13 voters, who according to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy are registered as internally displaced persons.

Of these, 28,341 voters had been registered in the Voters Register, that is, following the cross-checks were registered as disputed voters

On the day of the voting on December 11, 2016, a total of 1,153,962 citizens exercised their right to vote.

According to CIVIL' s final election observation report, the following "phantom voters" people in the Voters Register did not exercise their right to vote on election day:

- On November 10, 2016, CIVIL published a periodic report citing over 200 reported cases of phantom voters that were submitted to CIVIL during the prior spring months, which were not settled and whose names still appeared on the Voters Register when the report was published some seven months later.
- On the same day in the village of Dolno Perovo, 60 phantom voters along with residents of Mala Prespa who are registered and whose place of residence is in the village.
- On November 21, 2016, 66 voters from the village of Strima, Municipality of Lipkovo, who are registered in the Voters Register. There is no one living in the village.
- On November 28, in the Municipality of Resen there were strong indications that around 1,000 voters out of a total of 17,011 were phantoms.
- In the period December 5-8, 2016, CIVIL received over 600 calls from citizens who were concerned about whether they would have the opportunity to exercise their right to vote at the early parliamentary elections on December 11. CIVIL then handed over sixty well documented and justified cases to the SEC.
- Over 1,000 citizens from all sides of Macedonia, on December 11, 2016 were not able to realize their constitutional right to vote until 6.00pm, based on the processed reports in this category that were received by 6:00pm on the day of the voting.

- After processing a total of 750 reports from CIVIL's observers on the day of the voting, 500 more voters who on different grounds had not been registered in the Voters Register, were added to the figure of 1,000 reports of citizens.

Previously, during a 25-day period, from July 26 to August 19, the Voters Register was again open for public review by the citizens, following the fiasco of the two-time postponement of elections in April and in July 2016. From 39,502 disputed voters in the Voters Register, only 8,922 reports arrived to the address of the State Election Commission (SEC), out of which 3,620 had been submitted in person to the SEC or to its regional offices, while 5,302 were submitted through an electronic application. For the figure of 30,467 unregistered people, it was to be further decided no later than the date of the announcement of the early parliamentary elections on October 18, 2016.

Then, following the adoption of the Report on the public inspection on August 23, Dr. Subhi Jakupi, former president and current member of the SEC, stated that despite the public call, the media campaign, personal invitations (by post), campaign in the digital and printed media, the opportunity for electronic reporting, even from a mobile device, that the SEC was not to blame for the low result of 20% of the total number of reported disputed voters in the active checking of the Voters Register. According to them, the failure was due to weather conditions and annual leaves.

Through the spring and fall of 2016, CIVIL contacted the SEC on multiple occasions with questions relating to the Voters Register and, in general, to the work of this institution. As of the time of publishing this report, January 2017, we still had not received as response.

The number of disputed voters has come down to 28,341 voters, which remain with an undecided status. To this number, a large number of citizens with a right to vote was added one week before the elections, but without the possibility for this right to be exercised.

CIVIL – Center for Freedom on December 9, 2016, tried to submit documented cases of “missing” persons from the Voters Register to a representative of the SEC. To our great and unpleasant surprise, there was practically no one in the SEC to receive the material that CIVIL's team had prepared, in an effort to help at least a hundred citizens to realize their right. There was no one in the SEC to answer the telephone lines for a week, or to assist the electorate, and when there was someone to pick up the phone, citizens were left to wander through the institutional labyrinths by themselves. And no one was responsible for anything. It was the voters fault!

How, in fact, did it come to this chaos in the Voters Register, and who is responsible? The SEC was left silent. During the week prior to the elections, citizens could feel the inefficiency and lack of transparency of the institutions. It seems that the institutions were simply cooperating in obstructing the constitutional right to vote.

APPLICATIONS FROM CITIZENS, REPORTS OF OBSERVERS

Cases in which abandoned houses, ruins, and even non-existing buildings are homes to phantom voters...Double addresses at same places of residence, with different tenants, some of whom exist, while others do not...Deceased people whose names have appeared on the Voters Register for years, and who once again appear on the Register on the day of the voting...Phantom voters, people who do not exist, who either had not appeared previously or were a replacement for the old ones, the ones who have been removed...Entire settlements, neighborhoods and villages with more phantoms than actual residents...Voters who appeared in the Voters Register until its inspection ended, but on the day of the voting were not in the Voters Register...This is just a small portion of the examples of the real situation of the Voters Register. This situation, simply, looked like a scene from a surrealistic tragicomedy.

The revolt and disappointment among citizens was devastating. In one situation, after submitting an application, a citizen turned to CIVIL's team with the words "Good luck with the elections. I do not have the right to vote anyway".

A story that a revolted citizen told CIVIL in another case, illustrates even better the chaos that was taking place in the SEC just days before the elections. After not being able to find herself in the Voters Register, citizen J.D requested an explanation from the SEC. In just one telephone conversation with the Department for voters lists within the SEC, she had received five different answers! First, she was told that perhaps now she does not appear on the list due to technical problems, but that "on Sunday she would surely appear on the list." When she insisted on seeing her name on the list before Election Day, she was told that it was impossible, because according to their data, her ID card had expired. When she explained that her ID card would be valid until 2020, she received yet another

explanation: that she was on the list of disputed voters and that she should have reported within the legal deadline for real persons categorized as phantom voters. When she explained that her address was not listed as having phantom voters, she was told to contact the Ministry of the Interior and to report the other residents, because there were many tenants at that address. In other words, to report her own family as phantoms!

In the end, the SEC explained that the Voters Register was closed and that her name would surely not be found in it, that is, that she will not exercise her constitutionally guaranteed right to vote, although until now, she had been voting for 20 years at the same address without any problem! When she asked if she could do something about it if she filed a complaint, they told her that it was her civic right, but that such a complaint would not affect their decision – to be removed from the Voters Register!

In addition to the 200 reported “spring” cases that remained unresolved, CIVIL continued receiving reports from citizens, but also from our monitoring teams, which reported a huge number of irregularities in the Voters Register until Election Day on December 11, 2016, and in the days following..

The team of CIVIL Media, following the reports of the long-term observers and reports made by citizens, published a large number of cases on CIVIL's website, whereas independent media downloaded many of them and additionally did research on the topic. In this Report we present part of the findings that CIVIL Media published.

According to the published Voters Register, in the settlement of Strima, Municipality of Lipkovo, 66 residents are registered to vote in polling station 1123 in the primary school of “Dituria.” In the village of Strima, as of the year 2000, there are some people there during the summer, but in the past three years only one person has been living there, and in the winter even he is not there. Nevertheless, these 66 voters appear at all elections in this village, according to the report of our long-term observer.

In Ohrid on “Turisticka” Blvd. No 24, there is only one person living there with the initials T. Lj., but there are people listed on the Voters List as residing at that address that do not live there at all, nor ever have. One of them, G.B, lives in the US, whereas the person that actually lives at that address has reported that on Election Day he will be in Slovenia. Despite the proper reporting to the SEC, the four registered persons still appear on the list even after the closing of the Voters Register.

On “Spas Bandzov” Street, No. 12, in the Voters Register, 12 people are listed as registered voters voting at polling station 1276 in Ohrid, although in reality only one person resides at this address –whose name does not appear on the Voters Register.

In Resen, the list has not been cleared of phantom voters, not even after the last checking that was performed before it was closed on November 11. On the street “29th November” No.116, the family there had reported to the SEC in March this year, following the first review of the Voters Register. And even after the final inspection, the names of phantom voters still appear on the list, although the member of the family who had died in the meantime, was deleted from the list.

In polling station 1651, village of Nikolec, there are a total of 262 residents according to the 2002 census, and now 325 voters have been registered. Polling station 1652, which incorporates the residents of the two villages: Krani and Arvati, which realistically have 553 residents, now has 702 registered voters. Polling station 1649 in the village of Brajcino has 134 residents, but 180 voters. In this settlement, according to our findings, there are a total of 60 people living there, and barely one person becomes an adult per year. Polling station 1670 in the village of Stenje, among others, there are 8 voters from the village of Otesevo. But, Otesevo does not have residents, because it is only a tourist settlement and people come there during the summer for the weekends or on vacation. Polling station 1659 in the village of Gricari has a total of 417 residents, but a total of 644 voters.

Three people from Resen had found out that they have phantom voters listed at their addresses and reported the cases on time. They filed complaints to the SEC, but without any effect. In the meanwhile, one of the three died, but those close to him say that he was urgently deleted from the Voters Register, and that the phantoms still remain there.

In Skopje on “Puskinova” Street, No. 5/2-10, during the checks of the Voters Register in April, more phantoms are added during the last check. Namely, this address has been changed to “Puskinova” Street, No. 1/2-10, and the voters have been moved to another polling station, that is from polling station 2470 to polling station 2739. Despite the proper application submitted to the SEC, in April and August, no one has yet reacted to this application.

CIVIL published the publication “Free Elections: A Non-Negotiable Condition” in July 2016. It contains many cases of phantom voters, along with a series of reports and analy-

ses that can be a valuable indicator of how elections are NOT organized and how reforms in the direction of creating conditions for free elections are NOT implemented.

ELECTION DAY

„Над 100 гласачи ги нема на Избирачкиот список во изборните места 1456, 1456/1 и “Over 100 voters are not on the Voters Register in polling stations 1456, 1456/1 and 1457 in the settlements of Trizla, Prilep”.

“In polling station 1018 in Kumanovo, 25 people are not on the Voters Register, while one voter figures in two polling stations”.

“In polling station 2919 in Butel, 20 voters are not on the Voters Register”.

“In polling stations in primary school ‘Murat Labunisti’ in Struga, the main remarks of the observer are that many voters, with valid ID cards, could not realize their right to vote, because they were not on the Voters Register. In just 30 minutes there had been more than 30 cases of revolted voters without the right to vote. Voters had been clearly surprised of how this could happen, when previously they were exercising their right to vote without any problem. Moreover, electoral boards had problems finding voters in voter lists, saying that voters who had never been abroad had now been put on the separate list”.

On the street of “Ivan Kozarov” no. 16 in Kisela Voda, during the electronic checks of the Voters Register there were 8 phantoms, and during Election Day they still appeared on the list and realized their right to vote. CIVIL’s observer checked to see that these people had voted.”

“In polling station 2527 in primary school “Vera Jocik” in Gazi Baba, until 10:00h there were not even 10 voters on the Voters Register”.

“In polling station 2807 in the Municipality of Center, a five-member family did not figure on the Voters Register. In polling station 2680/1 in primary school “Blaze Koneski” in Aerodrom, 7 families are not found on the Voters Register”.

“In polling station 1964 in Tetovo, there are 15 phantoms and 27 voters living abroad who are on the Voters Register”.

On December 11, information came from observers that electoral boards referred all those voters whose names did not appear on the Voters Register to the municipal election commissions. The presidents of the municipal election commissions, considering themselves

competent, were referring voters to the SEC or to the regional offices of the SEC, which were mostly unavailable or told voters there was nothing they could do, that there would be other elections, and that it is quite enough that they had reported.

Tearce, December 25, election rerun in polling station 2011, 8 voters did not realize their right to vote!

On December 11, immediately after the close of polling stations all over Macedonia, CIVIL held a press conference to present the preliminary findings of its monitoring teams and the over 1,000 calls it received from concerned citizens of Macedonia throughout the day. Our conclusion, delivered to the public, read:

“The catastrophic situation with the Voters Register prevented many citizens of exercising their voting right. Phantoms and deceased people voted, but living people could not vote. The State Election Commission (SEC) failed to ensure the right to vote to all citizens with a right to vote. Those responsible for this situation have to face the consequences from the chaos in the Voters Register and the violation to the right to vote. But if the SEC considers itself irrelevant in deciding on the legitimacy of the Voters Register, if all involved institutions in the cross-checks of the register blame each other, and if the political entities in the elections have agreed and have legitimized the Voters Register as revised, then who will be held responsible? The citizens, as always.

Ahead of local elections 2017, an analysis and investigation on the work of the SEC and its bodies needs to be carried out, along with urgent reforms of this institution. This will enable the development of an urgent election model for revision of the Voters Register, as one of the basic issues for holding free and democratic elections.”

At the time of publishing this report, in January 2017, CIVIL still had received no response from the SEC nor from any other state institutions responsible for the implementation of free and fair elections in the Republic of Macedonia.

REPORTS
OF FOREIGN
OBSERVATION
MISSIONS



Snapshot from the numerous seminars and workshops of CIVIL

REPORTS OF FOREIGN OBSERVATION MISSIONS

BILJANA JORDANOVSKA

With its extensive experience and unique methodologies, CIVIL, as a human rights organization, has grown into a recognizable and relevant organization that conducts monitoring of election processes. This conclusion is based on the vast interest and trust that the citizens of Macedonia, and a large number of organizations internationally have given CIVIL.

The early parliamentary elections in Republic of Macedonia, which were expected to be decisive for many issues that influence the resolution of the political crisis in Macedonia, drew much attention from foreign observation missions. Without exception, all international missions and diplomatic missions in the country followed the work of CIVIL, requesting information and support, with productive cooperation being also established with many international organizations in the past period.

Representatives of CIVIL held over 30 briefings and presentations for the highest representatives, as well as for observers of international observation missions and diplomatic missions. On the ground, CIVIL's monitoring teams were entirely open and cooperative,

sharing their information and offering their support to international observers during the day of the voting on December 11. What follows here is a brief summary of the findings of four of the international election monitoring missions with which CIVIL collaborated.

SILBA- INITIATIVE FOR DIALOG AND DEMOCRACY (DENMARK)

SILBA- Initiative for Dialog and Democracy from Denmark (www.silba.dk) is a foreign mission that had a short-term election observation mission, which in cooperation with CIVIL, managed to cover 67 polling stations in the region of Skopje.

Divided into 7 teams, with 14 short-term observers, the observers of SILBA, to whom a representative of CIVIL gave a detailed presentation, successfully applied the knowledge from CIVIL's trainings on monitoring the elections in Macedonia, with special emphasis on the irregularities to which they were to pay attention during their observation.

According to their final report, Election Day went by relatively peacefully. Their remarks are in regards to technical errors, the tense atmosphere at the polling stations, especially before the closing at 19:30h.

SILBA's report has a serious remark regarding the lack of access for people with disabilities, at all the polling stations they observed.

SILBA's observers noted several cases of family voting, inappropriate behavior of party observers who were present at the polling stations and interfering in the work of the Electoral Boards, as well as suggesting voters who to vote for.

According to the SILBA report, the biggest problem they noticed took place after the closing of the polling stations and the process of counting the votes.

In three out of six polling stations their observers attended, party observers had also participated in the work of the Electoral Board, in the counting of the votes and their assessment on whether the votes were valid or not. According to them, such behavior affected the credibility of the votes, the summarization and the increase in the risk of fraudulent behavior.

An even greater remark in SILBA's reporting concerns the chaotic and disorderly implementation of the counting of votes, which instead of taking place behind closed doors was carried out with party observers and observers of civil society organizations constantly going in and out of the polling station.

Furthermore, members of the Electoral Board did not respect the Electoral Code and their lack of understanding of the instructions for the implementation of the vote counting process was evident.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY COUNCIL OF CATALONIA (DIPLOCAT)

At the official invitation of the State Election Commission (SEC), on November 27, the Public Diplomacy Council of Catalonia (DIPLOCAT) established a mission for observation of the elections (DEOM) to observe the early parliamentary elections, with five observer teams distributed across the country for a period of 10 days.

The mission comprised five teams with 12 observers distributed across the entire country in a period of 11 days, from December 4 - 14. From November 27, the mission held meetings with a large number of Macedonian citizens and participants in the election process, such as representatives of the State Election Commission, political parties, observer groups, civil society organizations, academics and journalists.

The communication and cooperation between CIVIL and DIPLOCAT, apart from the work meetings and presentations, was also carried out through CIVIL's observers who pointed out to them the critical polling stations, guidelines for monitoring and an overview of the election campaign at the local level.

Their observers visited 55 polling stations in the six electoral units, divided into teams.

DIPLOCAT's report noted that the sick and disabled, as well as persons under house arrest, were not provided conditions to vote by secret ballot. On the day of the elections, the screens for people with disabilities had been removed by members of the Electoral Board in several polling stations, and almost all of the polling stations proved unreach-

able. Some stations were located on higher floors, with no ramps or elevators to provide access for people with disabilities.

The conclusion of the mission is that, despite the fact that the elections were implemented in a peaceful atmosphere, the large number of irregularities leave room for improvement.

EUROPEAN STUDENTS' FORUM (AEGEE)

The European Students' Forum (AEGEE) is one of the biggest interdisciplinary student organizations in Europe. Within the framework of their activities they observe electoral processes throughout Europe. The young people participate in the observation missions, observing and evaluating the electoral cycles.

According to the European Students' Forum, young people in Europe are not sufficiently involved in the elections.

In the period December 6 - 12, for the monitoring of the elections in Macedonia, the European Students' Forum deployed 21 observers from 16 countries, in 90 polling stations in Skopje - Karpos, Gjorce Petrov, Butel, Gazi Baba, Cair, Suto Orizari, Center, Bitola, Kumanovo, Saraj, Tetovo and Veles with an assessment of the participation of the young people in the early parliamentary elections, held on December 11.

According to their report, 20% to 30% of the voters on Election Day were young people. The organization emphasizes that there is no statistical data on the age structure of the voters. Still, they conclude that in comparison to 2014, participation of young people in politics in Macedonia is growing.

Their general assessment is that all of the political parties have young candidates on the list, although their names appear lower on the list, decreasing the chances that they will assume office.

The European Students' Forum estimates that young people under the age of 30, in the polling stations that were visited, were represented in a limited number of the Electoral Boards, as observers of the parties and other domestic observers.

For a clearer insight into the political situation and the manner in which elections are implemented in Macedonia, they asked for support, information and briefings from CIVIL, as a relevant organization in the monitoring of the elections.

INTERNATIONAL ELECTIONS STUDY CENTER (IESC)

The International Elections Study Center (IESC) is a non-profit organization established in 2013 by the Swedish International Liberal Center (SILC) and the Eastern European Studies Centre, for the promotion of non-partisan evaluation of the electoral process, study and dissemination of the best practices in election administration, legislation and rules based on international standards.

On December 11, the International Elections Study Center provided 16 observers from the Russian Movement for the Defence of Voters' Rights, "GOLOS," one observer from the Swedish International Liberal Center and three observers from the International Elections Study Center. CIVIL, at the request of the International Elections Study Center, provided full support to this mission and shared information and findings with observers of all three organizations which comprised this mission.

Below are the main conclusions of the election monitoring of the International Elections Study Center:

- to ensure greater gender equality in the Electoral Boards,
- to ensure that polling stations are functional for people with disabilities,
- to regulate the counting of votes, in order to avoid bias and interference of observers in the work of the Electoral Boards.

An interesting remark of this mission regards photo and video restrictions, which negatively impacts the observers' ability to document possible election violations. They interpret our Electoral Code by emphasizing that it does not allow for the ballot to be photographed or recorded during the voting. With that, in their opinion, observers should be able to document the Election Day in this and other ways.

However, CIVIL did advise for photos not be taken inside the polling stations, and sent additional and precise instructions to its observers to not use cameras inside, in the polling stations.



MACEDONIA
NEEDS A PRO-
CESS SIMILAR
TO DENAZIFI-
CATION



Dr. Saso Ordanoski, CIVIL Press COnference, December 11, 2016

MACEDONIA NEEDS A PROCESS SIMILAR TO DENAZIFICATION

DR. SASO ORDANOSKI

The election process in Macedonia that concluded on December 11, 2016, can be assessed from two aspects. The first is the manner in which the elections were carried out, both technically and politically. The second is the election result.

In making our analysis, we must begin with the understanding that Macedonia is still not a democratic country, and that conducting elections in such conditions is a matter of accepting predetermined compromises. Democratic changes will not happen by themselves, but rather there has to be a process in which an undemocratic country becomes a democratic one. In such conditions, not entirely democratic, Macedonia had, from a technical aspect, elections that were performed correctly. With many flaws, of course, which once more confirmed that the main problems are on two levels.

Macedonia's main problem is its political parties, and in particular the ruling political parties, from which all possible abuses of the election process derive in different ways. The symbiosis between those political parties and the state organs charged with implementing fair elections, along with a host of other policies crucial to the development of democ-

racy, is in fact so strong and politicized, that it is practically impossible to have elections conducted by a neutral state, institutional structure. In that sense, most of the problems arose at that level.

The second problem is, always, the personal level. In the end, how an election will be carried out mostly depends on a dozen people and on the professional, and also human integrity of those people. The organization could have been better, and yet the goal not achieved with this human capacity and integrity and vice versa. Hence, in principle, Macedonia here saw its mirror.

There is a problem with the integrity of the people who are in top positions responsible for implementing the elections. This lack of integrity on the part of those officials tasked with the implementation of free and fair elections is the direct result of a longstanding effort on the part of the ruling party to institute complete regulatory capture, including in the electoral sector. Obviously, these people cannot manage to put together sufficient professional and human integrity abide to abide by and enforce legal standards, when it is in conflict with the party structure that has in many cases hired them and which exerts daily influence over their activities. That is necessary. In that sense, we had the anticipated failures.

Nevertheless, we have election results that have not been disputed. The Parliament has now been constituted with legitimacies of MPs who have been legitimately elected from a purely technical perspective, regardless of everything that had been said in the meanwhile, whose mandates have not been disputed. That is one part of the assessment of the election process.

MACEDONIAN SOCIETY IS A VICTIM OF AN UN-DEMOCRATIC SETTING

The second part of our analysis is the election results. It seems to me that we acquired a true picture of precisely what is happening in Macedonia. In a very skillful way, math or statistics played with the political forecasts and analyses that were performed in the past months, perhaps even years. You can see that autocratic Macedonia still has support,

and you see that pro-democracy Macedonia has even greater support. And this should not surprise us, because our society is divided.

Our society is a victim of an undemocratic setting. And in such undemocratic conditions, it is a real miracle to expect that the government will fall with democratic methods. That is why this victory for those who want changes is so significant, because it is clearly stated, in the total number of people who have voted for changing this government.

I think that currently Macedonia is emptied of political content in terms of forming a government. The direction of the ethnic Albanian voters is also clear, who in a great part opted for changes that are above their ethnic affiliation.

MACEDONIA CANNOT SOLVE THE POLITICAL CRISIS WITH A SINGLE ELECTION

Most of the analyses that were made before the election, and especially the ones made after the elections, indicate that Macedonia cannot resolve the deep political crisis by a single election. Consequently, no matter what government is formed, we will most probably have early elections in the near future. However, who will be forming the government after these elections is crucial, as it will determine the direction in which we will be moving until those early elections.

A government formed by VMRO-DPMNE and DUI leads Macedonia towards deepening of the political crisis. With a different majority, led by SDSM, Macedonia will receive a chance to move in a direction of changes which, though, will not be crowned with a complete restoration of democracy in the period until the next elections. But many essential points will be restored in such a way as to allow for the following elections to be a serious step forward towards the final resolution of the political crisis.

I think that in this respect, the international community should have an active role, precisely because one of the leading political currents in the country wants to isolate Macedonia from the international community. Macedonia would have not existed as a country

if the international community had not stood behind its independence. This needs to be said clearly, loudly and openly and should be repeated regularly.

Macedonia is a country with a certain democratic capacity and democratic history, and it still requires an active role of the international community, which has until now, generally, always proven to be positive. Therefore, we are awaiting these types of processes in the upcoming period. In any case, those processes will significantly reflect on the Special Prosecutor's Office (SPO).

The SPO is probably the most important institution around which the democratic restoration of Macedonia will take place. However, the SPO will not be the main victim, if there is no change in government. The whole democratic process will be a victim, and with such developments, the SPO will be a not so significant institution that will disappear or will not finish its job. Hence, we are faced with a clear choice. The election outcome shows that this process will not be simple.

MACEDONIA TO CHOOSE ITS FUTURE

Macedonia is a country that needs a process of complete reprogramming of the key systems. It is a social endeavor, very similar to what once used to be known as "denazification". We de facto need a process that will pull us out of the very wrong direction in which we have been moving in the past years. We have acquired a generation of people, who do not remember anything better than what is happening to them now. We have acquired a generation of people who are prepared to leave the country, regardless of who will be ruling the country and how. Those processes cannot be prevented with the same people and platforms as before. And that is why I say that Macedonia will choose its future now, and that we will be living that future, however it may be chosen.

THE SIGNIFICANT VICTORY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The civil society in Macedonia, the structure and type of policies that are present, reflects the political reality. You cannot expect for civil society to be much better or worse than what is actually happening politically. That is one side.

On the other hand, that is how it should be. I do not see why civil society should be 90 percent democratic, when our country is not democratic and when the main political actors in Macedonia are not in a democratic mood. That is why in the civil society you will see a blossom of democracy, as you will also see a reflection of chauvinist claustrophobia, which is a real expression of what is happening in civil society.

Macedonia's civil society has one crucial problem and one crucial advantage. The advantage and quality are that it disposes with an expert capacity of knowledge, which in key moments of the political crisis showed capacity that was at times same or sometimes even better than the political and democratic capacity of the ones that the state institutions, political parties, political elite and others should have. That capacity proved to be very productive and eventually received some support.

The shortcoming of civil society is that it does not have a major constituency; it does not have a large base. We have hundreds of qualified people working in NGOs, who are the result of a corporate civil society, which the EU and the contemporary ways of the functioning of democracy demand, but which have a weak base among the population. And it is not just a matter of "grassroots" that which is known as levels in civil society organizations, but it is actually a detachment from, how a mass of people thinks, and how an expert, qualified civil society thinks. This is also a consequence of the lack of access to free media free of political influence.

The election results showed that civil society went even further than my expectations, in two of the key communities in Macedonia, among the ethnic Macedonians, and I would say especially among the ethnic Albanians. Hence, that range of people that walked in front of the cameras, not only in the sense of protests, but also in terms of analyses in the media, provided sufficient information and a quantity of politically innovative ideas for a large portion of the people, for most of the voters in Macedonia to opt for changes. And I believe that it is, not a very big, but important political victory for the civil society

sector in Macedonia, especially when we look at the strength of the opponent. The hysteria that VMRO-DPMNE produced after the elections, against the civil society sector among else, tells you that on the other side you have a government that absolutely did not refrain from anything, in order to make all the pressures on that civil society sector, to abolish it, to intimidate it, to push it aside both at the personal and organizational level. And that is why that victory is even more important, because the civil society sector showed resistance that is even greater than the political parties. And this time I deliberately say it in plural, I am not saying just VMRO-DPMNE and I am not just saying DUI, but here I am also including other political parties.

MACEDONIA HAS POTENTIAL FOR INCIDENTS, BUT NOT FOR CONFLICTS!

Капацитет за судири во Македонија секогаш има. Прашањето е колкави би биле
In Macedonia there is always capacity for conflicts. The question is what the extent of those conflicts would be, but that is a question of resources. And the question of resources is always a question of who would stand behind that type of conflict. It is one thing to come to a situation to have conflicts, and another to more serious destabilizations, which require different type of support, resources, different type of motivations and mobilizations.

Macedonia currently does not have potential for greater conflicts. It has potential for certain incidents, but these cannot happen if they are not politically inspired by formal party structures, and in this respect I have no doubt, also in terms of security and para-security structures.

I can say that in the past 26 years there have been almost no serious incidents in Macedonia, behind which one or another of the security structures were not involved, sometimes under foreign influence, but usually also by the state. And the analysis of all of our pleasant and unpleasant events in those 26 years will show you that those structures also rely on certain political calculations with the conflicts and incidents, for the purpose of achieving a certain political goal.

I think that the current ruling structure has absolutely no capacity to carry out something seriously, except to further sink in what they plan to do, and this will in no way turn out well for them. Ultimately, they did try in May 2015 in Kumanovo to do what they did. That ended with a huge debacle.

Professionals were involved in what they did in Kumanovo. The civil society was not involved. Professionals were involved in a civil sense and in terms of security, and it also ended in a fiasco of dramatic proportions. Of course also as a human tragedy, because dozens of people were killed there.

When they did not manage to do that successfully, everything else, especially after so many months and with such election outcomes is just a matter of adventurous excursions.

However, do not forget that in politics there is always tomorrow!

Perhaps today you will cause an incident, and maybe tomorrow you will repeat it, but what will you do the day after tomorrow? Here again we can see that this type of policy has no political, short-term, middle-term, and especially no long-term benefit.



@Ladybug1490

1490



Follow

@Ladybug1490 доаѓа ќосето вечер. Има пискотници да се слушаат. Две ипол години го малтретирате цел народ. На врата ќе ви свони.



"Kjose is coming tonight. Screams will be heard. Two years and a half the people are tormented. He will ring at your door." – A Facebook status by a state administration official. (Kjose is a historical figure from the times of the Ottoman domination in the Balkans, known for his ferocity and brutal reckoning with his opponents.)

WHERE THERE
IS FEAR,
THERE IS NO
DEMOCRACY!



Dragan Zelic, GONG Croatia, CIVIL Press Center, December 11, 2016

WHERE THERE IS FEAR, THERE IS NO DEMOCRACY!

DRAGAN ZELIC

First, we need to congratulate all citizens of Macedonia at these important elections, that following all political crisis in recent years and following all political aggravations, certain minimum standards for holding elections were established, and compliments for the great turnout. I would like to congratulate CIVIL and other observers who were monitoring the elections, as this is not an easy job, especially in such conditions. Compliments to the observers of CIVIL who performed an important and responsible task of reporting on the election irregularities that were taking place on the Election Day in the Republic of Macedonia.

ASSESSMENT OF ELECTION DAY

Most of the citizens were able to fulfill their right to vote, despite difficult conditions in the country. However, the cases in which certain citizens of Macedonia, hundreds, perhaps even thousands of citizens, could not realize their right to vote, did cast a serious shadow on the election process.

So, I can vote, but you cannot, means we are not in equal positions. We must not forget that Macedonia is a candidate country for joining the EU, and such things should not happen in a candidate country. This needs to be said clearly and loudly. Such things do not happen by inertia. There are institutions that need to work on that and ensure that every citizen can vote. Unfortunately, this did not happen with this country's election process.

Unfortunately, I cannot say that technical errors are the issue here. It is unbelievable that the 'phantoms' that had to be deleted, obviously have not been deleted. However, healthy citizens who are alive were deleted instead, those who were not afraid and who wanted to vote and exercise their voting right, but were barred to do so! Someone might say that it is normal for mistakes to be made, but when a mistake does happen, people need to be told about that and there has to be a system in place, to protect their rights and enable citizens to vote.

We saw that ID cards were being issued today, and it is good that citizens who have that right are issued ID cards, but it is outrageous for people who are not 'phantoms' not to be able to vote.

In Croatia, if you are not in the Voters Register on the Election Day, you need to go to the General Administration Office where you will receive a document to confirm your legitimacy. And, with that confirmation, you return to the polling station to vote. It is unbelievable why this is not done in Macedonia.

I cannot let go of the impression that this is a consequence of politically motivated actions. There was not enough political will to conduct revision of the Voters Register. There is no science fiction here, it can be done, and I do not know why today so many people were left without their right to vote.

THE FIRST THING THE NEW GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO TACKLE IS THE ELECTION SYSTEM AND ADMINISTRATION

Macedonia will have much work to do in regards to the electoral legislation and the census of citizens, just as Croatia has numerous tasks concerning the same areas. We also had problems with the Voters Register, but the situation is far better now, and in this respect certain knowledge and experience can be transferred. The new government will have to have this as a priority, if it wants to have a state in which there is a rule of law, as it is being stated numerous times by CIVIL.

There is a saying that “Murky hunting is the easiest”. Macedonia doesn’t have to clear up the Voters Register, but then someone will be murky hunting, earning illegitimate power from unsolved issues in the elections system and administration. As the election result is narrow, where even a few hundred votes can be determining, then one might raise a legitimate question: Could those who could have not voted today been able to decide the winner in those electoral units?

What surprises me in an unpleasant way is the silence of the institutions, and CIVIL is pointing this out for a long time now. It is unacceptable, the State Election Commission is acting as if this isn’t their game, as if it is not them in charge of deciding on these issues. Do they not understand how important it is for them to respond and to say at least something in order for the public not to lose trust in the election process? Trust in the election process is the most important. If citizens do not trust the election results, then the entire political architecture crumbles and they will start doubting everything.

In Macedonia, in the past years you have had, to put it mildly, a “strong” government, which was quite “present” in many institutions that were supposed to be independent. The consequence of all this is the fear among citizens. I believe that this marked these elections. I completely understand the citizens for being scared when someone calls them asking if they have voted. Perhaps a citizen does not want to go to vote for anyone, but is afraid that tomorrow he or she might lose the job, or that his family member or a relative might lose their job, and these are not pleasant situations, to say the least.

During my stay in Macedonia, I could feel the fear in the atmosphere, and where there is fear, there is no democracy!

Macedonia is not the only case. There are people in Croatia as well, who are afraid of the local sheriffs. You all need to fight against this. In this respect, CIVIL gives great contribution. MOST and other NGO's, and I see that media have also slightly freed themselves. I think that the media will finally realize what their role is, how firm their position is, and that they will be able to defend themselves from political pressures and will establish certain democratic standards in this country.

RESPONSIBILITY OF INSTITUTIONS

The State Election Commission is responsible for the Voters Register, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior. In this situation, in which the SEC has not offered any explanation, any solution, and have hidden like rats in a hole, it would be politically correct for them to - at least - make their mandates available, not to mention resignations. This is a very serious matter. We are not talking about limiting a certain right, but about fundamental constitutional rights that are the foundation of democracy, such as the right to vote, and that is not a small thing.

As I could see, children have not only today been abused in the electoral context, but they have also been abused in the past. It is disgraceful, and speaks of how miserable politicians are. Everywhere around the world, not just in Macedonia, I also refer to Croatia, I mean for politicians to stoop so low as to use children for campaigns! This is reprehensible, and it is good that CIVIL has condemned this and speaks about it. In Croatia, unfortunately, these things continue happening, but the Children Ombudsman reacts automatically.

It is fine for the NGOs to react, for the media to report, but why do we have institutions? Those institutions are paid by the Macedonian citizens, and those institutions need to react and publically condemn such practices! And maybe, at the next elections, these things will not happen again.

PROMOTION, NOT VIOLATION OF DEMOCRATIC VALUES

If a government, former, present or any other government is not working on changes, then such government is not working on the development of the country. The pressure from the citizens will remain, as well as the pressure from NGOs, and there will also be certain media that will put public pressure, as well. Street are not excluded, either... If we warn in a nice way and offer solutions, but they don't listen, then we will take the streets and will see how it will turn out, because that is a democratic tool, as well. Of course, in a peaceful manner, but there are nuances here as well.

I will give the example of Croatia: We had HDZ in power for years, and then we had SDP, for fewer years, but the people realized that neither HDZ nor SDP as large parties were the real thing. They were disappointed by those large parties, so new players emerged, like Most and Human Shield. And that is the main political message to the Macedonian political parties, to take democracy seriously, to free the media, to protect these values, to promote democracy, and not to endanger them! That is the basic job of every government. Otherwise, new players will emerge and will take part of the votes, which is a democratic right, and I believe that this could also happen in Macedonia.

Dragan Zelic is an expert in electoral systems and election observation, working with GONG, Republic of Croatia.



THE RIGHT TO
VOTE HAS BEEN
VIOLATED!



Aleksandar Novakoski, lawyer and legal expert

THE RIGHT TO VOTE HAS BEEN VIOLATED!

ALEKSANDAR NOVAKOVSKI

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that every citizen has the right to be part of a free society, to be able choose or to be chosen. International standards for elections stem from political rights and fundamental freedoms – determined with universal and regional agreements and political rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a basic legal instrument. Accordingly, we have the International Public Law and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which also regulate electoral rules and standards. These documents have been signed by over 160 countries and are becoming part of the mandatory obligations of signatory countries. International instruments have strong political and moral strength, and such instruments, provisions and legal acts are already mandatory in electoral processes in democratic countries.

In all this, above all is the citizen, his rights and freedoms, and through the citizen and his freedoms, freedom in society is also appreciated. There are no free citizens without free

and fair elections! There is no democratically elected parliament without democratic and fair and free elections! There is no free society without establishing a system in which the citizens believe. In order to be part of the international democratic community, you must fulfil all international standards and have legitimacy in international relations.

To build this, you need to fulfil a series of requirements:

- To implement the international standards set by the International Public Law,
- To apply best electoral practices,
- To create a good political environment,
- To have a good professional election administration, a good electoral legislation and an accurate Voters Register,
- To have a balanced election campaign, regular and free media,
- To have a good, impartial non-governmental sector and many other procedures related to technical issues (counting of results, training, appeals procedure, publication of results...)

CONDITIONS FOR FREE ELECTIONS

Having peaceful and technically well-conducted elections are not enough for having fair and democratic elections and for electing a democratic parliament with full legitimacy, in order to receive an assessment according to international standards.

The state is responsible for creating free media, free independent non-governmental and professional regulatory bodies, and thus for respecting the separation of powers.

The Republic of Macedonia is overcoming or is at the start of overcoming a major crisis. We need to understand that now we can only make efforts to reach a certain assessment that the elections were credible and peaceful, technically well conducted, and that some standards, set by international documents, had also been fulfilled. In order to arrive at

this assessment, we need a peaceful campaign, consciousness among participants in the election race, consciousness of non-governmental organizations and of course of the media.

The SEC needs to wake up and understand that it is not just about the technical work, they need to leave the technical work to the service, whereas the members of the SEC need to be held responsible for all election irregularities, to make decisions and to be fully in protection and regularity of the election process.

In Republic of Macedonia, unfortunately, none of the competent authorities did manage to restore the trust of the voters in the election process and in the procedures that were undertaken, or to remove the series of remarks that were noted in the reports of international observers in previous elections. We have serious remarks in terms of violation of the provisions of the Copenhagen criteria. Part of them were supposed to be removed by the SEC, part – by the signatories to the Przino Agreement, and part – by the institutions.

As a result of everything that has been stated above, we need to sit down and, item by item, properly address the remarks of international observers regarding our electoral process, and restore confidence in the electoral process. So that at the next local elections we can hope for the following assessment – Elections conducted according to international standards, free and regular. For fair and democratic elections, I mean free elections, we will need much more serious and more thorough reforms.

There is no democratically elected parliament without free, fair and democratic elections. There are no free citizens without free elections, without respect for human rights and freedoms and without establishing a system in which the citizens believe in. Nowadays, democratic elections are not assessed only by the procedure of their implementation, but rather from the perspective of all areas of social life.

Vertically, if the citizens are in the first place, they are followed by a free society, free media, independent non-governmental organizations... That is the base of a healthy society.

In a horizontal structure that creates these conditions, first is the state that creates a free setting, followed by mutual trust, through the rule of law, separation of powers and creation of independent regulatory institutions. The state has to find mechanisms to separate itself from the parties and other lobby groups, and to always have mechanisms to distance party interests and the interests of party leaders, from the interests of the state.

Through the independent bodies responsible for implementing the elections and other independent bodies, the state has to prevent manipulation, fraud, breach of values, standards, and to protect free citizens from any such influence of those interests that offend and intimidate them, and which also violate the daily freedoms in everyday life, and of course, also the freedom of expression.

The term democracy and free elections has been explained and defined by many philosophers, scientists, historians, but it has never been defined and explained by politicians elected at dubious elections.

ASSESSMENT OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Overall, the election process, starting with when they were announced and also the period before they were announced in Republic of Macedonia, can be divided in three stages. First, we had a problem with the Voters Register that was not overcome, and this was confirmed on the day of the elections. In my opinion, the problem lies in the inadequate methodology and in this respect we should expect remarks, having in consideration that the Voters Register has been for quite some time now a topic of all the election processes, depending on who had what kind of results.

This time as well, the solution that was used and actively supported by most international actors and NGO's, showed once more that a solution has not been found. It hasn't been found because, in my opinion, an inadequate methodology was used, agreed between the four political parties.

Second, it is good that the entire election process was agreed upon between the political parties and that they entirely took over responsibility, so the competent bodies for conducting elections were excluded. Hence, literally both the composition of the State Election Commission (SEC) and the manner of its work were determined by the four relevant political parties, who gave their representatives in the SEC. The change in the composition of the SEC, with the assigning of the three experts, did not show any advantage. The election day itself showed that many people did not figure on the Voters Register. I constantly kept pointing out to that fact that this would happen. And it did happen. I was asked: "Why is that? How come?"

They think they are covered by the law. There actually is legal basis to defend the thesis that I know the SEC will defend: "Well, the law allowed us!"...For all those who with cross-data will be determined unsuitable and for those who will not apply.

However, they have forgotten some key issues.

We made a mixed combination of active and passive registration of voters. My question is: why wasn't the active registration accepted, which was proposed by most of the experts? I also proposed it two years ago. The goal was for the Voters Register to be completely questioned.

For the first time, we have a large number of voters who were not able to exercise their right to vote, which is a serious violation of the right to vote, according to all international election standards. The number of these voters is not known, but whatever it is, it is a violation.

I would like to see how the OSCE and ODIHR comment this and put it in the report. This is because in the initial reports they too mentioned it as a problem. But, if in this respect we take into consideration the law, perhaps they might pull back from a difficult assessment.

Thirdly, we had a peaceful election day and technically well-organized elections. But, taking into account the capacity of the SEC, it would have been a shame not to have a well-organized day in terms of materials, preparations...

Concerning the final phase, the elections were peaceful, because the political parties guaranteed they would be. I have to say that for the first time we had a balanced media approach, it was obvious and we need to admit it.

And now we come to assessing the work of the SEC. By the complaints alone, the SEC showed that it is politicized, which means that again no solution has been found.

And then the problem with not publishing the results during the night. In my opinion, that is unacceptable.

This is where you can see those political calculations, which later showed that perhaps here they worked under pressure. With that pressure, and with the narrow results at these elections, the entire pressure shifted to the SEC and on deciding upon the complaints. I think that it is unacceptable for a composition that has three experts, who, had they been experts and were not biased, regardless of the discussions of the political representa-

tives, could have solved those complaints very quickly. And those deadlines have been passed. That is why the Electoral Code will need to undergo changes, because in previous election cycles 200-300 complaints might have been solved. At the most peaceful elections up to 200-300 ballot boxes used to be opened and the entire material counted. Here again I think that an internal problem is the issue: coordination, organization and managing the election process.

CIVIL'S REMARKS WERE IN PLACE

I assure you that CIVIL's remarks were in place. I will not get into assessing previous election cycles. They are public, with final reports available on the website. We here, might now again face new remarks, which we deserve. The deadlines have indeed been distastefully and unacceptably passed.

When deadlines are passed with such a small number of complaints, it automatically means that pressure and politicization are the issue. I wonder why the members of the Electoral Boards from the political parties, for example, had not made any remarks in the report when they had noticed such a number of invalid ballots.

I understand the situation in the SEC, the deadline for making a decision is 48-hours. CIVIL as a non-governmental organization can make suggestions. But the problem is when members of electoral boards have not made notifications for invalid ballots, and in the meantime we have two complaints, which obviously shows the aim for something to change. The number of invalid ballots is neglected, but is quite large.

So the number of invalid ballots is significant and now there are speculations that they were made invalid for certain reasons, that most of the invalid ballots incurred under certain circumstances. In order to avoid such speculations, if members of electoral boards from political parties made such notifications, then the SEC would have had to open them, check them, and it would have been clear even to a nonprofessional if they had been made invalid out of anger, or if there were other intentions.

I remember one election process in which there really was a large number of invalid ballots, but when the boxes were opened it was determined that 90% (out of citizen's anger)

of them had been intentionally made invalid, with names of actors or insulting words, and this is something that can be checked.

The fact that there are no remarks from the members of the electoral boards is surprising. I have a comment on this matter as well.

The parties knew that a narrow difference was the issue, and so they did not make remarks, because there were opposite cases when they had made remarks, and were used by the party that had lost. So, once again we come to the conclusion that it was the headquarters that decided, and not the electoral boards.

I have not changed my position in regards to the Voters Register. You also know about the accusations that there has been no census, and that is why the Voters Register is as it is. There may be a point in all those things, but in order for it to be abused at elections, the electoral board has to allow it. That is how the Voters Register can be abused, otherwise it cannot be abused. You know that in certain places the turnout was 50, and even 60 percent, so again we have 40 percent who were on the list, but for some reasons did not want to vote. If the electoral board had been diligently doing its work, they would have not allowed for those votes to be abused.

There now is another problem. People who had went to vote were not on the Voters Register?!

There are 600 examples in the prison alone. I do not know the other figure, but an analysis can be made following the final results on what the number is of people who had went to vote, but who did not figure on the Voters Register. I will repeat, I do not believe that the Voters Register could have been abused at these elections by having someone allowing someone else to vote. There was a case, and it was under appeal. If there had been more cases, as NGO's have reported, then the electoral boards must have covered up themselves.

Again we come back to the electoral boards. They had informed the Municipal Election Commission and the SEC, whereas the SEC had not responded. If you remember at the press conference on the day of the elections when they said it was nothing, only 20 people, and at the end they turned out to be 330 people, and now we do not know the number. In order to submit an official complaint, someone has to prepare them, and citizens

are fed with everything, not everyone has conditions to come to Skopje to submit a complaint, and you know what happens with the electronic submission of complaints. The website was hacked, then it wasn't, and then it could not be checked...

If that number is high, regardless of the fact that the elections have ended, then we have a serious problem!

That means that we have deprived several thousand people from their right to vote. And if those thousands of people had voted, they would have changed mandates, as you could see at the election rerun.

As to the election rerun and the decisions of the Administrative Court, I had a statement that was completely abused by the media. I had said that the SEC could annul the voting ex officio, if it determined that there were irregularities in the voting caused by the electoral boards, if there were disruptions, if the UV lamps were not working... There is abuse even if a UV lamp is not working for 30 minutes.

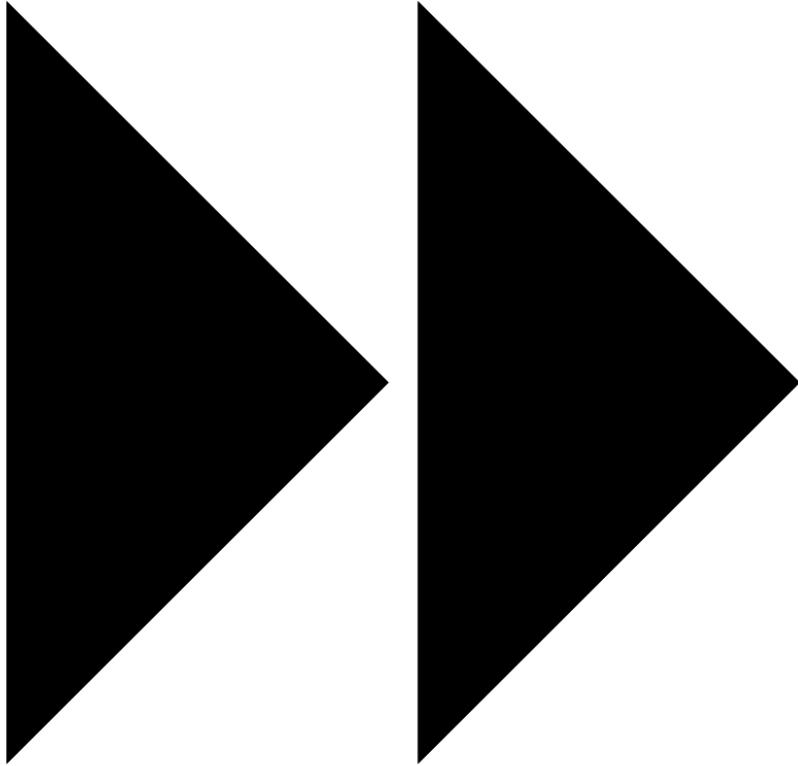
Why are you putting the entire Electoral Board in a situation of being held responsible and having to seek expertise? Because at the following elections a dishonest party, and we have such parties, might perhaps file 1000 complaints with 1000 graphological expertise. And the elections will not end in six months!

If that is the case, then there should be changes to the law! The deadline is short...That is why the deadline is extended, the final results are published, whereas the competent bodies look into the rest of the issues.

If one signature is the issue, and they determine whether it has been abused or not, what about those who were not able to vote, thousands of people? Accordingly, does this mean that the signature of the citizen that was investigated is stronger than the vote of the others? It is good that they opened that case, but the issue is that when they run into such irregularity, there is no need to request a graphologist! Voting is annulled ex officio and there is a rerun! In this case not even the Administrative Court can do anything about it. That was my opinion, and not that it should not be checked. Everything needs to be checked. But, within those deadlines, if you are not constantly educating the members of the electoral board to notify of invalid ballots, do not expect later for the NGO's to solve that problem. Nobody can solve that problem afterwards.

Obviously, they had all calculated and we have no information on whether they did or did not make remarks in the reports, but the parties did not use them for appropriate complaints or we do not know about that, because the results suited them.

(Novakoski is a legal expert and a lawyer, member of the Expert Team of CIVIL, former President of the State Election Commission.)



THE STRUGGLE
FOR DEMOCRACY
IN MACEDONIA



Sandra Gavrilovska, CIVIL Press Center, December 11, 2016

THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN MACEDONIA

SANDRA GAVRILOVSKA

It is sad that in Macedonia we are still speaking and advocating for respect of the basic democratic principles, which, undoubtedly, should be a pillar of any normal and healthy social order.

Concerned international actors are in a serious and well-intended manner, almost desperately telling us about respecting the basic principles of modern democracies, among which in particular: separation of power, equality of citizens (especially before the law), rule of law and fair trial, political pluralism, free and fair elections...

But it would be difficult to measure the degree of democracy in our society, especially according to the quantity and quality of the represented democratic values.

In a situation where the ruling party is entirely equalized with the state, with complete

concentration of power in one family and complete control of the thought and speech, we can only speak of an authoritarian, and not a democratic state, or government.

Without the application of the already tested and practically proven concept of separation of power, which John Locke wrote about (in Two Treatises of Government) back in 1690 (!), it is difficult to talk about independent and separated one from another state bodies (legislative, executive and judicial).

We can speak even less about a system of checks and balances that has the purpose of preventing abuse of state power.

And we can speak the least about some kind of democracy of the state or government (does not matter).

In the context of the great importance of the application and respect for the basic democratic principles, a persona non grata once said that in conditions where the basic democratic principles are not respected, one cannot expect for the elections to improve democracy, but that on the contrary, it would be a (I quote) "burial of the remains of what was once a democratic state".

The question remains whether the democracy in Macedonia (which I have already characterized as fragile and anemic) will receive a chance for salvation and survival.

Democracy will probably not have another chance, and we will have no other choice but to have all the actors in the film titled "Struggle for Democracy in Macedonia" freed from the constraints of frustration, fear, hatred, political affiliation and ambition...in order for democracy to win.

The subject of this brief analysis for the needs of CIVIL's Election Monitoring Report are the legal sanctions for election irregularities, evaluation of the work of the State Election Commission and a brief overview of the competencies of the Special Prosecutor's Office.

SANCTIONS FOR ELECTION IRREGULARITIES

Our legal system contains many legal provisions that provides for penalties and sanctions for election irregularities.

Namely, both the Criminal and Electoral Code contain punitive and penal provisions for criminal offences related to elections and anticipate financial penalties and also prison sentences of 3 and more than 5 years for committed criminal offenses related to elections, such as: acts of preventing elections and voting; abuse and violation of the right to vote; violation of the voter's freedom of choice; violation of the secrecy of voting; bribing during elections and voting, destroying electoral documents, committing electoral fraud and for other unlawful acts committed in the organization and in conducting the electoral process.

The prescribed penalties and sanctions are anticipated for literally all participants in the electoral process: for political parties and coalitions, electoral bodies and their members, for officials performing work related to elections and voting, and even for the president and members of the SEC, as well as for members of the Government.

The problem is actually in the practical application of such prescribed penalties and sanctions for election irregularities, for which the fault lies in the non-functioning of the legal system, or in the non-functioning of the state bodies and non-fulfillment of their legal obligations and competencies, especially by the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, the SEC, Public Prosecution, along with the courts (of all levels).

In this context, in March 2016, a Commission for monitoring election irregularities was formed by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Republic of Macedonia, with the alleged purpose of providing protection from criminal or other unlawful actions and monitoring election irregularities that could be committed in the organization and implementation of the elections on December 11, 2016.

However, we have still not heard about the Report of this Commission, nor of any proceedings being initiated by the competent basic public prosecutors or by any other competent state body in regards to any committed election irregularities.

That is just one of the many pieces of evidence showing the individual, but also global non-functioning of the legal system, in all segments.

STATE ELECTION COMMISSION

Obviously, the SEC faced many problems in its work at these elections, which were caused by various internal, external, domestic, foreign and many other influences and pressures.

And despite the SEC's structure, which was supposed to, or was expected to ensure conscientious, professional, transparent and lawful operation of this institution, which is or at least should be a pillar of an election process in a normal democratic country, I do however think that the SEC did not achieve the expected results of its work at these elections as well, disappointing the citizens yet again, who have lost their trust long ago not only in the SEC, but also in the state institutions overall.

According to the existing legal provisions, the State Election Commission can and should be held responsible for abuse of power and authority, as well as for violation of the voting right, because its unconscientious work and not acting upon the requests of the citizens to be registered in the Voters Register, and for removing non-existing voters from the Voters Register, contributed to people having the right to vote, not to be able to exercise their voting right, or people voting, but who do not have that right.

SPECIAL PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

According to the Law on the Special Prosecutor's Office, or the Law on Public Prosecutor's Office for prosecution of offenses related to and arising from the content of the illegal interception of communications:

- the mandate of the elected public prosecutors in the SPO is 4 years, with the right to a re-election, and
- the functioning of the Public Prosecutor ends after the completion of all investigations and prosecutions under its jurisdiction.

The legal deadline for initiating investigations and proceedings by the SPO is 18 months starting from the date when the cases and materials are taken under their jurisdiction.

However, having in consideration all the obstructions in the recent work of the SPO, I believe that this deadline should be and has to be extended.

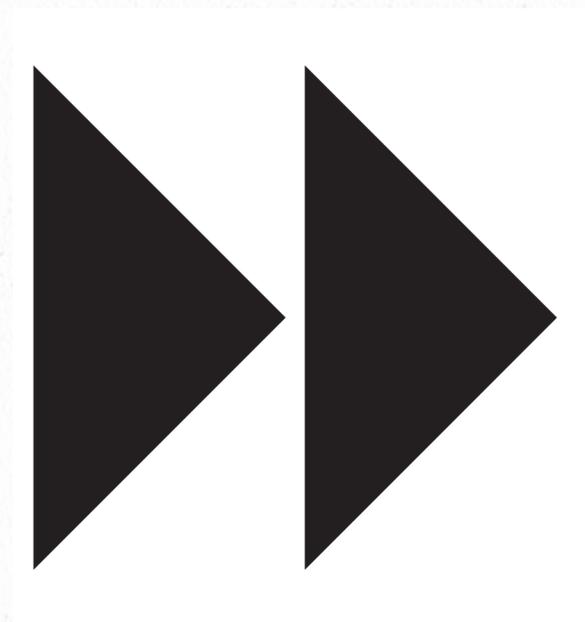
And for this 18-month deadline to be extended, changes will have to be proposed and requested for the existing law on the SPO, for which there also has to be political will by the parliamentary majority, in order for the changes to pass in a parliamentary procedure.

The purpose of the extension of this 18-month deadline is for the SPO to achieve its role, and with its entire capacity to engage as quickly as possible in initiation of all charges that may arise from the materials they have taken under their jurisdiction, as well as to complete already initiated proceedings, for which a special court department will have to be formed, so that the work of the SPO may have any real effect.

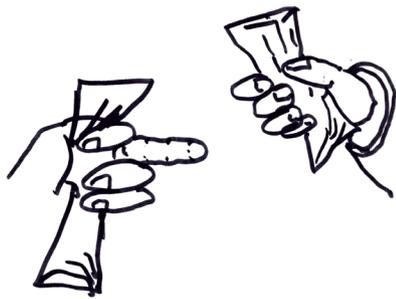
Regardless of the legal provisions under which there is no danger for the SPO to stop functioning, the fate and survival of the SPO will, however, certainly depend on the composition of the new government, as well as on the long awaited decision of the Administrative Court for assessing the constitutionality of the Law on the SPO, or for eventually determining the SPO as unconstitutional, which, nevertheless, would be a political and not a legal decision of the Constitutional Court.

At the same time, it would be absurd and meaningless to declare the Law on the SPO as unconstitutional, in a situation where this Law has been adopted in a parliamentary procedure with a huge majority, namely, with 118 votes “for”.

(Sandra Gavrilovska is a legal expert and lawyer, member of CIVIL's Expert Team.)



FINANCING ELEC-
TION CAMPAIGNS
OF POLITICAL
PARTIES



FINANCING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

GORAN NAUMOVSKI

The financing of election campaigns of political parties is still an enigma for the Macedonian citizens.

Amendments to the Electoral Code in the section that regulates this sphere, as settled in the Agreement of Przino (Agreement in Skopje to overcome political crisis) inevitably raises the question of whether they are sufficient to alleviate the effects from the longstanding practice of corrupt and/or illegal funding of election campaigns, as well as operation of all political parties in general.

In the Article 4 of the Law on financing of political parties, it is clearly stipulated that financing of political parties has to be public and transparent, with possibilities of full inspection by citizens and authorities to control the financial and material operations. Also, the sources of funding of political parties are public and transparent, and they are a subject to control by the competent authorities for financial and material operations.

According to Article 5 of the Law, it is provided that every citizen is entitled with the right to equal access to the inspection of the financing of any political party, but despite the legal obligation of the political parties, the public has no such insight in practice, and sources of funding and expenditure of political parties remain unknown.

The team of CIVIL - Center for Freedom, continuously monitors and analyzes the financing of political parties with special emphasis on monitoring of the expenditures during the campaign and election process.

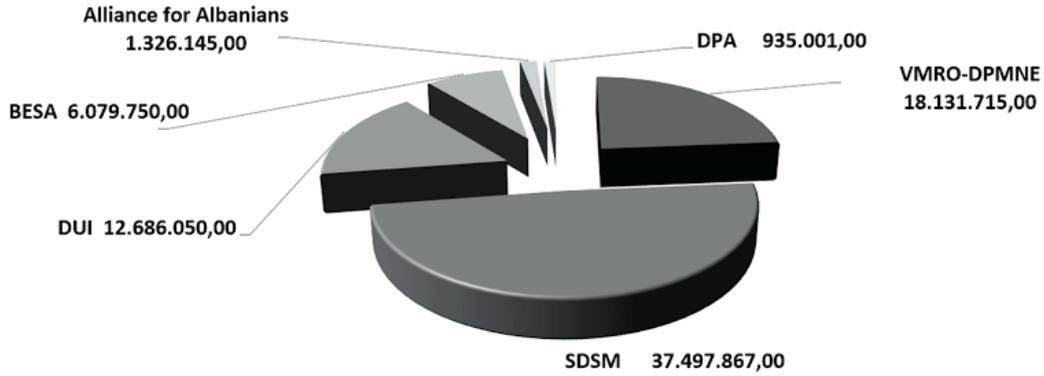
In the interest of space and time, this analysis of income and expenditure, based on the reports submitted by political parties, applies only to the six political parties that won the most votes in parliamentary elections and seats in Parliament.

PARTY/COALITION	VOTES	WON MANDATES
Coalition led by VMRO DPMNE	454.577	51
Coalition led by SDSM	436.981	49
DUI	86.796	10
BESA	57.868	5
Alliance for Albanians (coalition)	35.121	3
DPA	30.964	2

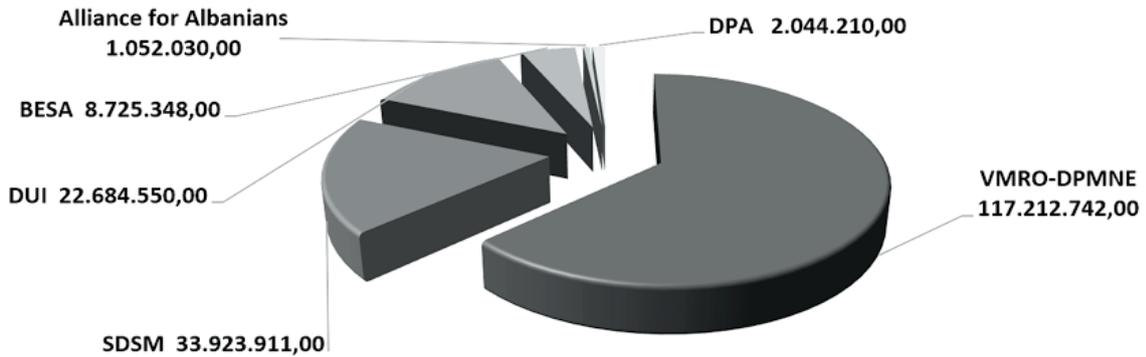
Based on the legal obligation of each political party participating in the election process to submit a financial report, the revenues raised and the expenditures are presented in the following tables:

PARTY/COALITION	INCOMES	EXPENSES	DIFFERENCE
Coalition led by VMRO DPMNE	18.131.715,00	117.212.742,00	-99.081.027,00
Coalition led by SDSM	37.497.867,00	33.923.911,00	3.573.956,00
DUI	12.686.050,00	22.684.550,00	-9.998.500,00
BESA	6.079.750,00	8.725.348,00	-2.645.598,00
Alliance for Albanians (coalition)	1.326.145,00	1.052.030,00	274.115,00
DPA	935.001	2.044.210,00	-1.109.209

INCOME



EXPENSES



From the data presented, one can clearly see how much resources have been raised, as well as how much it has spent.

The political parties' revenue structure is dominated by donations from individuals, while some parties have reported significantly high donations from legal entities.

An interesting fact is that political parties' expenditure is not in the frame of the budgets raised for their campaigns.

Some of the parties have made savings, i.e. they have managed to spend less money (as it is the case with SDSM and Alliance Albanians) and the others have spent much more, i.e. they've got indebted (case of VMRO-DPMNE, DUI, DPA, and BESA). The leader of spending more than there it in their budget is the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE, which is indebted with fantastic MKD 99,081,027.00 or EURO 1,611,000.00.

According to Article 86, Paragraph 1 of the Electoral Code, any of the above mentioned runners in the election campaign, whose candidates are elected, are entitled to reimbursement/compensation of campaign costs from the budget of the Republic of Macedonia in the amount of MKD 15.00 per vote.

The compensation is as follows:

PARTY/COALITION	NUMBER OF VOTES	COMPENSATION PER VOTE	TOTAL COMPENSATION
Coalition led by VMRO DPMNE	454.577	15,00	6.818.655,00
Coalition led by SDSM	436.981	15,00	6.554.715,00
DUI	86.796	15,00	1.301.940,00
BESA	57.868	15,00	868.020,00
Alliance for Albanians	35.121	15,00	526.815,00
DPA	30.964	15,00	464.460,00

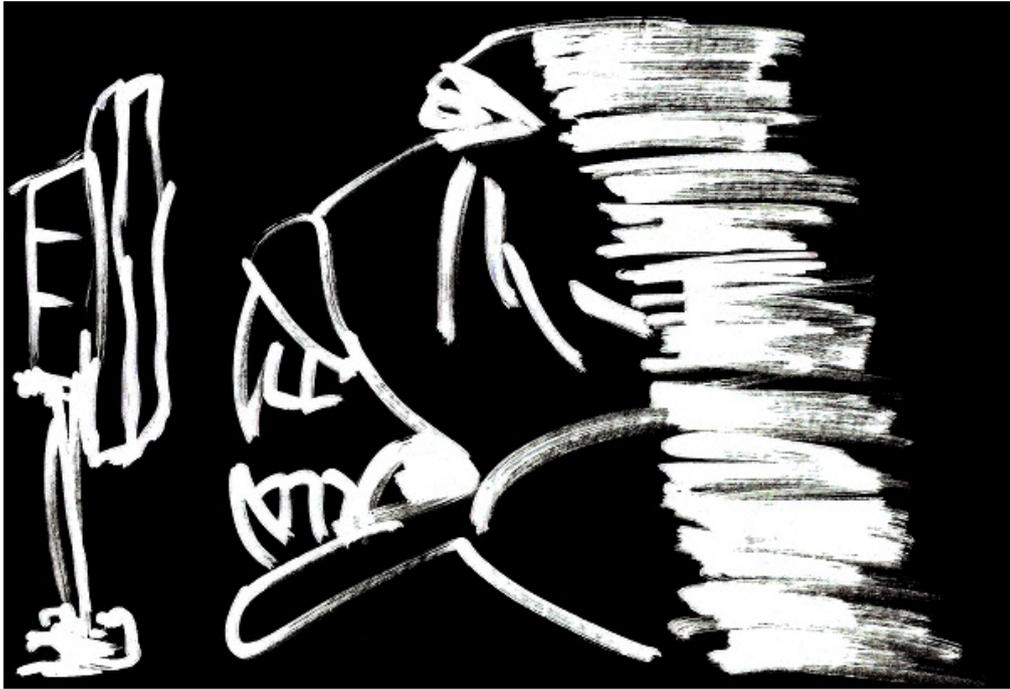
These tables clearly indicate that the compensation to which political parties are legally entitled are far from being sufficient to cover their debts, so the question inevitably arises - where are they going to raise funds to cover their skyrocketing expenditure?

Before the latest amendments to the Electoral Code, political parties (coalitions) were legally required to submit a final financial report on the election campaign to the competent authorities within 15 days after the end of the campaign, a period for their “tampering” was pretty short.

According to an amendment to Article 85, Paragraph 1 of the Electoral Code, deadline for submission of the overall financial report on the election campaign is 30 days after the date of closing of the special bank account for that purpose.

The addition of paragraph 10 article 71 of the Electoral Code, which regulates the closing of the special bank account within three months after the date of publication of the final election results, in fact, the parties (coalitions) are given a period of four months to submit the final financial statements for campaign financing. This allows parties to fashion their financial statements in a way that may create room for reasonable doubt the legality of financial operations of political parties.

For these reasons, this analysis cannot be complete, so the answer to the question on their financial operation we can get only after the expiration of the legally permitted four months for submission of the final financial statements. Only then we will be able to get a complete picture on their finances, particularly, the question of covering the debts.



THE DIRTIEST
MEDIA CAMPAIGN
EVER



Petrit Saracini, CIVIL Press Center, December 11, 2016

THE DIRTIEST MEDIA CAMPAIGN EVER

PETRIT SARACINI

The manner in which the pre-election campaign was carried out in the media is a sad and brutal reflection of the reality in which the Macedonian society has found itself, including the manner in which it tried to solve the political and social crisis through this election process in Republic of Macedonia that many, even political actors themselves, considered to be a milestone in the country's history.

In practically abnormal conditions that have been created for years, the media setting was a battlefield between the efforts of the democratic and progressive part of society and the public for having minimum conditions for holding credible elections, and the continuous obstruction and violations by the government and the media close to them. The framework for that struggle to take place, in relatively more equal positions, was enabled through the partial implementation of the legal changes that followed as a result of the Przino Agreement. But the fight for the minimum was replaced with a real election competition, in which the media serve as a platform for confrontation and analyzing the political offerings and creating a setting for an informed choices of citizens. After every-

thing we have seen, the media, as guardians of democracy and the public interest, in a polarized and divided society in Macedonia on political, ethnic, religious and many other grounds, are far from being up to the task that has been set before them.

In such a framework, these elections, unlike the last several election cycles, were different in that they were taking place in a media setting that was a bit more favorable and robust. Different offers of competitors in the elections could, more or less, be heard, even in media that have been serving as propaganda outlets for a long time, because of the role of the regulator and the strict legislation, but also because of the more consolidated image among the critical media and part of the public.

Nevertheless, this by far does not satisfy the criteria and the manner in which the media should report on elections in a democratic country. Domination of the government and biased reporting in favor of the government are still evident among many media, which can be proved through several indicators.

At these elections as well, we could notice that instead of having information on the election offer, an analysis of what is offered and confrontation of arguments, we had a media campaign dominated with attempts for slandering the political opponent, for defocusing from real issues and debating on false topics. Instead of a debate, there was much more room for a one-way propaganda, paid or unpaid, whatever. It is a terrain on which the government has long dominated, which for years, precisely through that kind of “understanding” of the media, has brought Macedonia in a situation to be qualified as an unfree country by respected international organizations. It was the same again, at least judging by the money and the seconds and space that each of the parties spent and used in the media.

The main anomalies were lack of debate, selective and superficial informing, generating topics for discussion in the public through orchestrated media agendas and an instigating speech, especially in the last ten days of the election campaign in the media.

LACK OF DEBATE

When we speak of lack of real debate among political actors, we need to emphasize that this is primarily due to ruling VMRO-DPMNE's refusal, for quite some time now, to sit at a joint table together with its political opponent at a media confrontation. The heads of the parties have not confronted each other before the citizens, and neither have list-carriers. The only thing that will remain noted is Nikola Poposki's appearance on a debate of TV Alsat with other candidates of Electoral Unit 1.

There were debates on national television stations MTV1, MTV2, TV Telma, TV 24 news, TV Alsat, TV21, TV Senja, TV Art. There were no debates on the most viewed pro-government television stations TV Sitel, Chanel 5 and TV Alfa. There were debates only on TV Nova, in which often there was no presence of representatives of the biggest opposition coalition.

Instead, as a substitute for VMRO-DPMNE, analysts Pandov, Dastevski, Nikovski, Karakamiseva, Naunovski, Kostov and others appeared at television debates. There were practically no examples of direct confrontation among party candidates of the two biggest parties, except for the one on Alsat and the several attempts with the lower echelons on MTV1 at the start of the campaign, and that was it.

The situation was somewhat more favorable among the Albanian media, there were more debates between the government and the opposition, although with remarks on the refusal of the ruling DUI, but also of DPA, to be guests in certain media or to debate with other parties of the Albanians.

Furthermore, there were problems in terms of access to sources and interlocutors from the "other side". Having access to sources close to the ruling parties is almost impossible for the critical media, even though there are cases of complaints coming from pro-government media as well, who say they face difficulties in providing interlocutors from the "other side". In such a constellation, it is almost impossible for the media to offer information that will be impartial and objective, contents that will comprehensively show an event or a certain situation in society.

During the campaign, VMRO-DPMNE informed TV Telma that it would not attend debate shows. Following the first few confrontations, there was also a lack of real debate be-

tween representatives of the government and the opposition on MTV1 as well.

DUI blocked TV Senja, and DPA and DUI, and in addition, it did not accept debates with the “smaller” parties, as they called the Besa Movement and the Alliance for the Albanians. On MTV 2, for example, we were able to see a debate between candidates Idriz Orana from DPA and Driton Kuci from DUI – with two analysts.

Levica (The Left) also announced its “absence” from debates on Telma in the middle of the campaign, publically expressing its dissatisfaction and polemicizing on the social networks with people from the editorial staff and management of the media outlets regarding the time and space they had received for debating on television.

The confrontation between candidates and their offers was at a similar level also on the regional and local media. For example, the debate on TV VIS between the candidates from Electoral Unit 4 was held without Nikola Gruevski.

THE AGENCY FOR AUDIO AND AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA SERVICES AND THE INTERIM COMMITTEE FOR MONITORING THE MEDIA – A REMEDY THAT DIAGNOSES, BUT DOES NOT DELAY OR CURE THE DISEASE

The work of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) and the Interim Committee for monitoring the media during the election process, which was formed as a “special body” within the framework of the AVMS, managed just slightly to alleviate the effects of the many years the centers of power covered the media space, mainly, by those close to the ruling parties.

The possibility for imposing sanctions did have a certain preventive effect with some media, and perhaps even a “cooling” effect in reporting that encourages self-censorship. On the other hand, during this entire period, it could be noticed that the ad-hoc Committee

was not deciding with a consensus and that it worked under political pressure from outside and inside, and that some of its members were expressing themselves in the public in a way that is inappropriate for public servants with such a specific responsibility.

While the new provisions in the electoral legislation concerning the media were functioning, and were part of the political agreement between the four parties, it could be noted that in the content of the broadcasters, unlike before, there was more room for the opposition, and that most of the media were refraining from open attacks and instigating speeches, unlike before. This impression certainly was disrupted in the last part of the campaign by certain media.

However, on the other hand, the media could also be noticed using other means of manipulating the public opinion, above all, by generating several topics that were dealt with for days by several media outlets that portrayed certain political options in a negative way, not only through political, but also ethnic, religious and other contexts.

The media did this by presenting irrelevant and non-essential parts of views of political actors, by their distortion and putting them in the wrong context, and also by highlighting and overemphasizing, or minimizing and creating certain events in the editorial agenda, or in the order and content of the news. This type of reporting, although completely inconsistent with the standards of journalism and election coverage, could not at all be addressed within the framework of the methodology and competencies of the ad-hoc Committee, whereas the Media Agency, even though formally putting its available mechanisms, did not manage to have substantial impact in improving the coverage of certain influential broadcasters and of the entire media market in general.

In the first week of the campaign, the ad-hoc Committee issued a proposal for infringement proceedings against TV Alfa for violating Article 75 of the Electoral Code, because the voice of an employee in this television station can be heard in political spots of a political party, and against TV 24 News for violating Article 75 of the Electoral Code, due to merging advertising blocks with just one political party in them and broadcasting election advertisements of parties in special informative programmes, and also against TV Nova, because of paid political advertising in the news program "Argumenti" (Article 76, paragraph 4), and for broadcasting additional advertising time per real hour (Article 76g).

For the second ten-day period of the campaign, the Interim Committee for monitoring the

media coverage published the reports of their monitoring after several days of delay. The session of the ad-hoc Committee within the AMVS was scheduled to be held in December, but was not held due to lack of quorum. During this period, on December 5, the Interim Committee submitted to the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services proposals for proceedings against Television Nova DOOEL Skopje, TV KOMPANI 21-M DOOEL Skopje, NASHA TV DOOEL Skopje, Regional TV Ultra DOOEL Skopje, TV Telma DOOEL Skopje and TV Alsat – M DOO Skopje. On December 8, the Committee also submitted proposals for proceedings against TV Nova DOOEL Skopje, TV MTM DOOEL Skopje, K Tri Television DOOEL Kumanovo and EF-EM 90.3 Sports Radio DOOEL Skopje. All of the proposals were in terms of exceeding the permitted advertising time or broadcasting blocks of political advertising in informative programmes.

At the same time, the ad-hoc body withdrew the proposal for misdemeanor charges against TV Alfa, as one of the members had withdrawn his decision after a re-examination it had been concluded that TV Alfa had not committed five infringements (a quota set according to the agreed upon methodology for the work of the Committee) and thus “earning” a proposal for misdemeanor charges from the body, as it had been previously agreed for all the media.

Television station Nova, on December 5 and 6, 2016, had notified the Agency that it was facing problems in their reporting on rallies of certain political parties. The Agency in this most recent case, again, repeated its position that no one is allowed to obstruct journalists and news crews in carrying out their professional responsibilities, and thus limit the public’s right to be informed on current social and political events.

Nevertheless, our impression that there is no specific epilogue or long-lasting effects from the role of the regulator and of the legislation, reinforces the fact that so far there has been no concrete judicial epilogue for any of the proposals of the Committee. Whereas, some cases that were reviewed by the Administrative Court, were rejected with administrative explanations that they had occurred outside the period for which the ad-hoc Committee had been responsible.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE WITH SPECIAL EDITOR OF THE NEWS PROGRAM: NOT GOOD ENOUGH

Improvement in the coverage during the elections, both in terms of analyzing the offer and in terms of monitoring the activities of political parties, could also be noticed in the news program of the First program service of the Macedonian Television. It can be concluded that this is primarily due to the change in the editorial policy, which came with the new editor of the news program, temporarily appointed for the period during the elections, upon the proposal of the opposition, in accordance to the agreement between the leaders of the biggest parties in the country.

This once again proved that the key to the problems in the media in our country lies in the interconnection between the media editorials and managements with policies and the government, and that when that interconnection is disrupted, the media immediately start producing a more realistic image of society.

But here it could also be noticed that the editorial does not have enough resources for quality implementation of the election coverage of candidates and monitoring of election activities of all political entities respectively.

PRESSURES, ATTACKS AND RESTRICTIONS ON THE MEDIA AND THEIR FREEDOM – OF EVERY KIND, AND EVERYWHERE

During the election campaign some other events also took place, and certain occurrences were noticed that display the impeding circumstances in which the right to freedom of information and the right to an informed choice are being realized.

Case 1: Who shut down the portals, a technical problem or...?

At the start and end of the first week of the campaign there were two attacks on several web-portals, which resulted in a several-hour interruption of access to their websites. This interruption was treated as quite suspicious by the public.

UNET Internet Provider claimed that it was a matter of a technical problem.

At the end of the week, several websites of this host provider were again shut down, so the public was rightfully asking if this was more than a coincidence, and if it was in fact an attempt to endanger the freedom of expression and the freedom of the media.

Case 2: Clientelism in the SEC or media racketeering?

The quarrel between the management of the newspaper “Lajm” and the Vice-President of the SEC, Rexhep Prekopuca, also drew the attention of the public.

On the one hand, the editorial claims that it had been damaged in the bidding for SEC’s announcements in the media, accusing Prekopuca of making a deliberate error in reading the offered price of this media outlet for the requested advertising space.

On the other hand, Prekopuca accused of pressure and blackmail by the media in order to win the tender. Both sides announced lawsuits.

Case 3: There is no truth on an empty stomach!

In the period covered by this report, the public learned that correspondents of MTM newspapers and publications from the interior of the country had not received payment for their work since July 2016.

This is just one of the many news coming from this company for months and years, each worse than the other in terms of the labor rights of its workers. And it concerns one of the major business-operations, which includes the richest people in Macedonia in its ownership. If the situation is as such among the richest, close to the resources of the government, one can only imagine what it is like with the other media and their owners...

WHAT DID THE MEDIA REPORT ON THE MOST DURING THE ELECTIONS, AND IN WHICH WAY?

The media offer for the elections, in the first week of the campaign, but also after that, was dominated by a black campaign and “false” topics and news: federalization, the discourse of patriots and traitors, hate speech at rallies (cages, prison for the political opponent), the case with the photos in Halkidiki, which is part of the case “Spy” that also brought a stigmatization discourse of the LGBT population, part of the pro-government media also dealt with false news that Soros had died, contextualizing the event negatively for the opposition and the civil society sector, several media outlets used the old propaganda recipe for “poor attendance at rallies”, or “transferring of branches and members”, repeating news on these topics almost every day...As never before, the political spinning and propaganda have become the primary concern of the campaigns, and not the informing.

In this campaign and in the media releases, abuse of religious issues could also be noted, such as, for example, with the propaganda of the media releases that if SDSM came to power, its program provides for mandatory circumcision or “Sunnet”, and among the Albanians with “Besa’s” campaign and the motto “if you believe in God,” but also with Ali Ahmeti’s appearances in which religious issues were addressed in different ways, which was used for building the religious “media profile” of the leader of the ruling DUI.

There were also instigating speeches and hate speeches, which partly came from the rhetoric and the communication approach of some of the participants in the campaign, but were also partly produced by the media themselves, as support for the topics that need to “dominate” in the campaign according to assessments of party PR strategists (such attacks on political opponents were noticed mainly on online media). There was also hiding or minimizing of events (as was the case with the death of a man on his way to a VMRO-DPMNE rally in Ohrid, or, for example, the attitude of the pro-government media towards the press conference of the SPO before the very start of the campaign).

Several pro-government media outlets, through the imposed topic of alleged danger of federalization of Macedonia, were spreading instigating speech, which disrupts the interethnic tolerance in the country, or attacks those who are not politically like-minded.

THE CASE OF TV SITEL AND “THE COST OF BILINGUALISM”

The most obvious example of this is the editorial comment of TV Sitel that was made on December 6, titled “The cost of bilingualism.” The comment presented a number of figures and statistics without any source, pointing out that bilingualism would cost Macedonia 50 million euros, that thousands of ethnic Macedonians would lose their jobs in the administration, education, health care, and that thousands of new Albanians would be employed. This fear-mongering aimed at the ethnic Macedonian community culminated with a story that purported that 70,000 Albanians would be moved into the eastern part of Macedonia, thus changing the country’s ethnic map. While these words were running, an animated map of Macedonia was being drawn in the background with three big arrows moving from the western part of the country towards the eastern, representing the “invasion” of Albanians. And all of this, without a single source, without a single fact, but hidden behind the empty phrases of the “editorial comment”, “the experts say”, and wrapped with figures, graphs and animations, so that it would seem startling and convincing at the same time. The AVMS conducted special monitoring for these series of stories that lasted for several days on this television, and prepared a report of 24 pages, which concludes that there is violation to article 48 of the Law on the Media (hate speech) and a procedure has been initiated for further action by the Commission for Prevention and Protection of Discrimination according to the anti-discrimination legislation, but also before the Public Prosecutor’s Office in terms of addressing these violations according to the Criminal Code. We have yet to see how the Anti-Discrimination Commission and the Public Prosecutor’s Office will respond to AVMS’s monitoring of December 28, 2016 and to the proposals for charges against TV Sitel.

*

There is a similar approach also in the documentary that deals with the character and work of billionaire George Soros and his foundation, which in the last days of the campaign was shown on the public broadcasting service MTV1, as well as on TV Sitel, Alfa, Sitel3, Kanal 5...The documentary, mainly based on half-truths, speculations, conspiracy theories, of course, does not forget to repeatedly draw a parallel between the bad character of Soros and his domestic accomplices in the character of the opposition and the civil society sector in the country.

However, it is not as if our public does not know and is not sensitized about what is appropriate, and what isn't in the media. Here, for example, the public's attention in this period was drawn by a comment made by Olivera Trajkovska in the show Top Topic, which contained the term "autism" and the reaction of a parent of an autistic child, who requested from the journalist and the media to apologize for the incorrect use of the term. The editorial and the journalist did not apologize, as they considered that the word was used in a completely different context, which does not stigmatize those suffering from autism.

MOST "BLOOD" – IN THE BATTLE ON THE INTERNET

The online discourse has become a dominant battlefield of propaganda, while slanders and insults, constant stigmatizing and demonizing of certain entities from the political, but also from the civil society sector, along with one-sided and partial "journalism" on the digital platforms, were an everyday practice during the early parliamentary election campaign as well. This type of approach was especially noticeable on the portals Kurir, Republika, Netpress, Press24, Puls 24, Vistina (Truth), Vesti (News)...Moreover, we had Maktel, Informaks, Narodni Glas (People's Voice), Center News, which in addition to the above mentioned, also had an offensive and insulting vocabulary.

During this period, certain sites began appearing with false news – like the Veles sites in the American campaign, created in Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Bulgaria, and Albania, which publish exclusive news at the expense of a certain political option. There was such news published during this week at the expense of the opposition, primarily in terms of the relation SDSM and its leader Zaev with the Albanians.

THE GOVERNMENT Poured MONEY, THE OPPOSITION TRIED TO COMPETE, THE SMALL PARTIES AND THE PARTIES OF THE ALBANIANS WITH MOD-EST CAMPAIGNS

In terms of paid political advertising, which intensified with the official start of the campaign, things here also did not run smoothly during this period. The main conclusion is that unlike before, when the media were rubbing hands because of the funds flowing into their accounts during the campaign, now, due to the drastic drop in the cost of advertising, and other circumstances, it seems that the advertising became a burden for the media not only in the market, but also in the political sense.

The opposition complained that it could not buy air time on certain television stations that was free and not bought by other opposition parties.

TV Telma complained in the public about the inefficiency of the parties and their arrogant attitude from many aspects in the negotiations for the advertising of the parties on this television. In this respect, let us also remind of the quarrel between DUI and the newspaper “Lajm”, concerning the reviewing of the advertising offer submitted to this media outlet, which received other dimensions as well, for which we already wrote about in more detail in this report.

The media in the Macedonian language were dominated by VMRO DPMNE’s campaign. This was followed by the opposition’s campaign led by SDSM, while the other parties

and coalitions were much less represented. As for the media in the Albanian language, DUI's campaign was much more dominant, while the campaign of the Besa Movement was also visible. It could also be noticed that the Social democratic Union also had a campaign among the Albanian media. Other parties in the "Albanian bloc" could hardly be noticed in the paid political programme, and overall led much more modest media campaigns.

NOTE: The subject review of this analysis are aspects relating to the media and human rights (primarily, the freedom of expression), voting rights and media legislation in regards to elections. The sources upon which we have based our analysis include the findings of CIVIL's research team, media contents, but also reports of the AVMS and the ad-hoc body that assesses the media coverage in this period, the State Election Commission, as well as reports of other NGOs, civil society and expert organizations monitoring the coverage during this period.

(Petrit Saracini is a media expert, journalist, artist and activist, member of CIVIL's project team)

RECOMMENDATIONS: THE WAY OUT

In order for free and fair elections to be achieved in the Republic of Macedonia, it is crucial that voters are not only able to execute their duty on Election Day free of intimidation, pressure, and irregularities, but that they are able to arrive at the ballot box well informed about the choices that await them.

Unfortunately, the situation of media freedom in the Republic of Macedonia has deteriorated rather than improved in recent years, attracting the criticism of numerous international organizations such as Freedom House (which deemed the media sector “Not Free” in 2016) and Reporters Without Borders, which warned that “selective allocation of state advertising was used to control and gag the media.” CIVIL’s own reporting on the media environment in the months leading up to early parliamentary elections on December 11, 2016, has echoed these concerns.

Given the current media environment, it would be naïve to expect the media to play this crucial role in the public and in the political processes in the country in the near future.

First and foremost, without first improving the political situation one cannot expect to have improvements in the situation with the media. The media are a mirror of society, and every society receives a government and media that it deserves. The ugly picture of Macedonian society must be repaired in several aspects, and this requires political will.

Currently, media outlets are usurped by the governing parties; operate in the absence of a judiciary that will punish hate speech and public calls for lynching, violence and murder; and without consistent implementation of legislation for slander and insults.

Without drastic changes to these conditions, a responsible and transparent media sector simply is not possible.

Without ensuring fair market conditions for the media, and fair working conditions for journalists, a free media sector is not possible.

Without respect for the standards of the profession of journalism and the code of ethics, there is no free media. If journalists themselves do not solve matters, they will always leave room for someone else from outside to solve them. Self-regulation is one of the pillars upon which independent journalism rests. It should be embraced and cherished, and not sabotaged and trivialized. Without a true independent public service, which will set an example for standards and quality for other media, the quality of the content in the private media, which nevertheless has private business interests, will not change.

If drastic changes are not made in the areas of regulation, self-regulation, and funding of the media sector, we can expect these problems not only to continue, but also to worsen and degrade further, which will adversely affect the chances for Macedonia to overcome this social crisis that could have far reaching and regional implications.

ORCHESTRATED MEDIA BACK TO THE OLD WAYS: OBEDIENT GOVERNMENT PROPAGANDISTS BARE- LY WAITED FOR THE MANDATE OF THE AD-HOC BODY TO END!

DEHRAN MURATOV

After the elections were over and the work of the ad-hoc body for media regulation during the election process ended, the strong control of the government over the media in Macedonia continued. Editors of certain orchestrated media, instead of impartial reporting, immediately returned to their well-known role of “servants of the Party”, creating propaganda contents like marketing agents, primarily of VMRO-DPMNE.

After the State Election Commission of Republic of Macedonia annulled the voting in the Tetovo village of Tearce and brought a decision for an election rerun, pro-government media started constantly running video surveys with statements by the same residents in Tearce, who state that the elections on December 11, 2016 were fair and democratic and that there is no need to re-vote. This is just an example of how the media for years have been under a strong control of the government, trying through many orchestrated and commissioned reports and texts to portray the elections as successful, and VMRO-DPMNE as an absolute winner.

It is not clear why the ad-hoc body for media did not function and did not follow the work of the media after the elections on December 11 were completed? The body is formed as a political agreement in Przino to monitor the media contents until the elections are entirely completed, and the elections did not end on December 11, because there was a rerun in Tearce.

The pro-government media used this “flaw” to spread negative propaganda through media contents against the opposition. They had room for manipulating, through their stories to intimidate the citizens that if the opposition led by SDSM were to receive one more seat, that there would be cantons, federalization and division of the country.

The ad-hoc body did not react to such stories, because “its mandate ended” on December 11!

CIVIL requested the opinion of several experts about the (un)professional attitude of the media towards the elections, and on the manner of reporting during the campaign, on election day and in the post-election period.

The Director of the Council of Media Ethics of Macedonia, Marina Tuneva, says that politicians fought through the media to obtain their “deserved space”, while journalism played the role of a servile servant in that intention. Hence, the media were unable to decide by themselves, so they let others decide on their behalf.

“Unfortunately, a good part of the media did not pass the test of professionalism and failed to free themselves from the pressure of the political situation. Apart from turning into announcement stations of the political parties, they abused their space in order to give it away to political parties and their agendas and messages, even when they contained instigating and fierce rhetoric. The long-lasting perception remains that ethics are not the core of the work of the media, but rather an abstract idea”, says Tuneva.

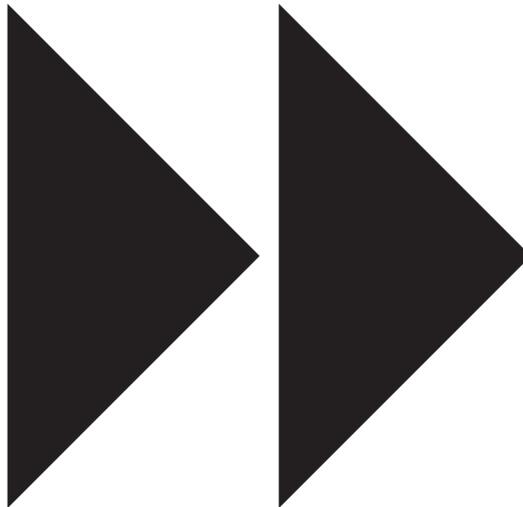
Communicologist Sefer Tahiri, stated for CIVIL that Macedonia is deeply imbedded on the list of unfree media, because several media had texts with same titles, with same topics, which shows that these contents come from a certain party center or propaganda service.

“Unfortunately, this is the true picture of the media in our country. Reporting is one-dimensional and in one direction. Destructive topics are created where the opposition is attacked, NGOs, the critical media, all with the purpose of portraying VMRO-DPMNE as the real winner at these elections. Often, in certain media, there is also hate speech, discrimination, slander..., towards those opposing the ruling party”, says Tahiri.

Snezana Trpevska from the Macedonian Institute of Communication Studies, stated for CIVIL that before the election campaign had started, there was a period in which it appeared as if though there was improvement in the media reporting on political actors. She adds that this was done on purpose, in order to leave a positive impression in front of the international community, especially as a result of the second political agreement of

Przino.

“Pro-government private media provided much more space for the opposition in the news and ‘reduced’ the demonizing discourse towards the oppositional and other critical voices, while MTV reported in a relatively balanced manner on all political actors and topics. But, as the campaign was nearing it also became clear that it really had been just an impression. They went back to being what they were, so to say. Again we could see the same demonizing rhetoric towards the opposition, flagrant favoring of the ruling party and uncritical presentation of open hate speech coming from the highest government officials”, says Trpevska.





A BLACK

CAMPAIGN

ЗА МАКЕДОНИЈА СЕ РАБОТИ! ЗОРАН ЗАЕВ ЗАГОВАРА КАНТОНИЗАЦИЈА НА МАКЕДОНИЈА!



ЗА МАКЕДОНИЈА СЕ РАБОТИ!

Ако Македонија ја немаш, а се друго имаш, тогаш ништо немаш! Покажи дека си патриот! Гласај против кантонизација, промена на уставот, двојазичност и редифинирање на државата! Една грешка може многу да ја чини Македонија!
Да гласаме за унитарна и суверена Македонија!

ЗОРАН ЗАЕВ ЗАГОВАРА КАНТОНИЗАЦИЈА НА МАКЕДОНИЈА!

Тој предвидува пренесување на надлежностите на полицијата од централната на локалната власт, што значи дека Арачиново, Тилково, Чаир и другите општини во кои албанците се мнозинство, градоначалникот под своја команда ќе има сопствена униформизирана и вооружена полиција, и овие општини ќе одлучуваат за вработувањата, за културата, за здравствата, за управување со нивите, шумите и пасиштата, ќе издаваат лични карти и пасоши.
На стр. 163 и 164 од програмата на СДСМ, се издаваат дека општините ќе ги направат кантони.

извадок од програмата

КАНТЕНЕ НА ЛОКАЛНАТА САМОУПРАВА
На општините ќе им бидат пренесени сите надлежности што може да ги извршат и организирани од централната власт и тоа, без да управат функциите на МРО (материјална инспекција, соработка и вонредни делови) дел од надлежностите на полицијата (делови БСД и мир и регулатори на сообраќајот) локалната полиција (општинска медицинска полиција, спешна заштита, центри за првобитна медицинска помош, зградите на установите од релативна културата (од институции на ниво од национално значење) управување со земјиштето, земјоделството и пасиштата и др.

A BLACK CAMPAIGN

MAJA IVANOVSKA

Instead of an election campaign where the media act as an arena for confrontation and for analyzing the political offer, Macedonia has faced a sad and brutal picture of the reality of the Macedonian society. Instead of placing emphasis on the programs offered by political parties, in perhaps the most important elections since the time of Macedonia's independence, the Macedonian pre-election period was filled with fierce accusations, insults, political spin, defocusing of the public and an ugly political game.

The negative campaign that has the purpose of discrediting the political opponent, where human dignity is not respected and negative framing and stereotyping is performed and where personal attacks are made against political opponents, has reached its culmination to such an extent that Macedonia can freely be considered as an example for the definition of black campaign – a dangerous set of tactics aimed at manipulating the darkest fears, anger and hatred of the electorate, sewing division throughout the country.

The black campaign has become a common denominator of all participants in the electoral process.

The campaign was focused on corruption, crime, wiretapped calls, and spinning part of the political offer of the parties, with no consideration as to the means used in achieving this. Although this election campaign was expected to be one of the dirties until now, having in consideration the fact that these elections are a political milestone, pub-

lic relations and political marketing party experts carried out a remarkably successful tactic of imposing certain topics aimed at defocusing the public from the actual problems.

This tactic is mainly developed by the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE, which has realized the forecasts of the creators of the current policy to a great extent. The superbly mastered techniques of political spin and sewing hatred, enriched with daily political propaganda, unfortunately, have been extraordinarily successful. There is still a great part of the public that is “buying” these “products”, although on no basis, given all the problems facing Macedonian society, should they have become topics of public interest and further tear apart the already divided society.

Defocusing from the real problems was present in all shapes and forms, starting from videos on the beauties of Macedonia to mutual accusations on who is responsible for the collapse of Macedonia. This usually had a strong nationalist overtone in which ethnic and religious communities were demonized and held to blame for a host of problems, while other citizens (namely, any who resisted the dominant party) were labeled as traitors and spies. The statements of political opponents were continuously and aggressively taken out of context and were used as cold weapons against them, by skillfully avoiding the burning issues and real challenges facing the Macedonian electorate. The news and public events were based on cheap political pamphlets full of hate speech and calls for extreme violence.

Through all of this, Macedonia remained thirsty for a real political debate, in which the opposition would not take the bait from the government, which continuously imposed artificial and destructive topics and contents. Instead of ignoring the imposed topics, the opposition entered a deep polemic on bilingualism and the supposed federalization and introduction of cantons in Macedonia.

Although Nikola Gruevski at the very start of the election campaign, instead of a black campaign, announced a 500-page real program of VMRO-DPMNE, the reality showed to be much different.

“I would like to point out to all of you citizens of Macedonia, that there are not 101, but rather more than 1001 reasons why not to vote for the opposition, but we are not poisoning you with such a negative campaign, their hatred and destruction speaks for themselves, we are giving you 500 pages filled with reasons why to vote for us...We are offer-

ing a huge number of real projects and measures” said Gruevski at a pre-election rally in Skopje.

At first sight, the announcement of the campaign seemed overly optimistic, but Gruevski’s promises of running a clean campaign was very soon contradicted by what turned out to be his major talking point at rallies across Macedonia:

“In addition to bilingualism throughout the entire territory, Zoran Zaev has obviously also promised the country’s division into cantons. Cantons in Switzerland is one thing, but a completely different thing in the Balkans. Cantons in Macedonia would mean five, six cantons, which in time, one by one, will legally start seceding with a decision of their local canton governments. We do not need such a thing. We must stand in the way of this crazy idea of Zoran Zaev. We must stand because there will be serious consequences of great proportions. Whether it will happen in three or five years, the problems will come knocking on our door. We are just pointing out to everyone that they will disrupt our peace, and cause us great problems and quarrels. Let us massively stop this on December 11, and tell them what kind of Macedonia we want, and that no one can have control over us”, stated Gruevski at a rally in Veles.

In addition to these statements, personal insults, threats and blackmail, as well as hate speech became ever more present in political speeches as the campaign progressed. It was repeated multiple times that Zoran Zaev should be put in a cage on the square, because that is where he belongs, and that “traitors” like him need to end. At another rally, Gruevski expounded on this idea, fantasizing aloud about how one of Macedonia’s founding revolutionaries would have disposed with Zaev:

“And he came here in Delcevo to talk, to become Goce Delcev, what would he have said about us as a Government, that has built so many things, that has attracted so many investors, which put so much energy, strength, assistance to the farmers in Macedonia, and many more things. So he is to cite Delcev. I will tell him. If Delcev were alive today, he would not be able to even say hello to him, he would have the Kyoseto sent to finish the story with this kind of man,” said Gruevski at a speech held in Delcevo. With this, Gruevski openly threatened with murder, to which none of the relevant institutions reacted, which is not surprising at all, having in consideration that they are under complete party control.

Although it seemed that the oppositions were leading a slightly brighter campaign, it, nevertheless, did not remain immune to the provocative speeches, and so Zoran Zaev during a speech in Cair, Skopje, addressed the leader of VMRO-DPMNE with the following words: “While I am speaking about Goce Delcev, you Nikola, are threatening with the Kyoseto. However, everything that has a beginning has an ending. Nikola, what is the name of Kyoseto’s right hand? It is called Dokurcev (dork). What more can I tell you, Dokurcev and Kyoseto”.

The thing that is extremely concerning in this rhetoric is that candidates, list barriers, are publicly calling for lynching of political opponents, referring to figures of the past such as Andon Lazov – Kyoseto, whose nickname was the Butcher, which gives sufficient explanation of his role in the national movement. It is precisely with these figures of the history of Macedonia that Gruevski was leading the entire campaign, whereas the “real” problems and his “real” solutions were and remained just a décor.

The negative campaign, in addition to the speeches of candidates, also appeared in propaganda material of the parties and in the printed and electronic media. In this respect, there was printed propaganda material with the content: “SDSM wants to federalize Macedonia! The highest national interests are a subject of SDSM’s bargaining. SDSM is putting the integrity of the Republic of Macedonia at stake”.

Several of the political videos broadcasted on television had the sole purpose of discrediting the political opponent, with no respect for human dignity, with negative framing, stereotyping and with personal attacks against political figures in both of the biggest political parties of the Macedonian bloc.

The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services sent to the Public Prosecutor’s Office – Skopje the political videos “With a vote for VMRO-DPMNE you become complicit in these crimes” (commissioned by SDSM) and “Bending the spine or state interest” (commissioned by VMRO-DPMNE), due to indications of violation to Article 48, to which the Public Prosecutor’s Office responded that it would not initiate criminal proceedings as from the “content of the two videos it can be concluded that from a criminal and legal aspect there is no reasonable suspicion that a criminal offence prosecutable ex officio has been committed”.

The real debate on how much Macedonia would gain, and how much it would lose at these elections was hidden behind the artificially imposed topics. Behind the reasons for defocusing the public, lies the fact that there is no will, nor courage for a dialogue and priority for solving the real problems facing the country, such as the non-functioning of the state institutions, which was also visible during the election campaign, but also in the post-election period, before and after the results were published.

This black campaign did not lag behind even in the post-election period, as proved by the events in front of the State Election Commission, where high representatives of VMRO-DPMNE publicly called for some sort of “night of the long knives”. Gruevski presented his Proclamation, which not only confirmed the black and destructive campaign that was recently being carried out, but also the intentions of this party for a brutal confrontation with all those standing in the way, starting with foreign mediators, ambassadors, diplomats and ending with representatives of the civil society sector.

The things about which CIVIL – Center for Freedom had been warning about more than a year before the start of the election process, came to light, and some of the political entities remained deaf and silent to the constructiveness and cooperation that we offered.

On the contrary, CIVIL, along with much of the civil society sector, and even part of the state institutions, such as the Special Prosecutor’s Office, became yet more targets of the black campaign. On the menu of the ruling parties and their media novices were insults, slander, hate speech, everyday fabrications, and even public calls for execution and lynching of activists, intellectuals and oppositionists.

In efforts to resolve the already overly long political crisis in Macedonia, the intellectual and academic public, the opposition – now increased and expanded, the civil society sector and the media must not succumb to provocations and the dictate of destructive structures in the public sphere. All destructive topics imposed by the government, whose sole aim is to defocus the general public from the burning issues we are facing, have to be rejected. Putting all issues that are a priority for this country under the rug, must simply stop. Every nationalist and militant rhetoric has to be strongly condemned!



TWO HUNDRED
DIFFICULT
DAYS FOR
MACEDONIA



TWO HUNDRED DIFFICULT DAYS FOR MACEDONIA

MONIKA TALESKA

The Republic of Macedonia did not achieve any significant progress in the second part of 2016 in terms of restoring democracy, the rule of law, the work of the Special Prosecutor's Office (SPO) and the freedom of speech.

After the second attempt failed, June 5, 2016, to hold early parliamentary elections for putting an end to the political crisis (which culminated with the "Wiretapping" affair on February 9, 2015) the uncertainty in regards to the implementation of the Przino Agreement continued. The pro-democratic public, participants of the Colorful

Revolution, and civil society, were all closely following every step of the political elite of VMRO-DPMNE, which on the other hand, was hindering the progressive beginnings, especially from the SPO's agenda.

The ruling party of VMRO-DPMNE and its coalition partners further kept the state captured. Every attempt for progress and restoring justice was followed by fierce obstructions by the centers of power.

On August 31, however, the leaders of the four parties that concluded the Agreement for overcoming the political crisis in Przino, Nikola Gruevski (VMRO-DPMNE), Zoran Zaev (SDSM), Ali Ahmeti (DUI) and Menduh Thaci (DPA) with the mediation of the international community, signed the "Annex" to the Agreement and agreed on a final date for the elections – December 11, 2016. Early parliamentary elections were scheduled for the third time, with the imperative to be free, credible, fair and democratic and to put an end to the political crisis.

Meanwhile, they agreed for the investigation to continue and the court proceedings for the criminal offenses arising from the "Wiretapping" affair.

The conditions were not fulfilled. The elections were held.

VMRO-DPMNE won 51, SDSM 49, DUI 10, DPA 2 seats. New relevant parties emerged in the Albanian bloc: BESA, which won 5 seats and the Alliance for Albanians with 3 seats. Following a year after Gruevski's resignation as Prime Minister (VMRO-DPMNE General Secretary Emil Dimitriev was appointed prime Minister on January 18, 2016), President Gjorje Ivanov handed him over again the mandate to form a new government. The state fell into an even deeper political crisis. The ethnic Albanian parties came out with decisive demands as part of the unrealized Ohrid Framework Agreement (signed on August 13, 2001). It is uncertain whether VMRO-DPMNE will succeed to form a new government or if the mandate will be given to SDSM, in accordance with the law. The citizens are in agony. The fear of uncertainty, returning to the old system that kept the institutions under control is even more stronger. The need of mediation by the international community is once again an imperative for the Macedonian state.

July and August

LEADER GRUEVSKI IS FURTHER A MACEDONIAN "SHADOW" PRIME MINISTER

The devastating floods that struck Skopje on August 07, 2016 and the surrounding area, in which more than 20 people lost their lives, and twice as many injured, and which caused huge material damage, actually opened the real picture of Macedonia's political scene again. VMRO-DPMNE leader Gruevski showed that he is actually Macedonia's shadow Prime Minister. With populist methods and guerrilla action "Government step aside, Gruevski is issuing commands!", having just returned from Antalya, he once again insulted the intellect of his party colleagues, ministers, and especially of the current Prime Minister Dimitriev. With the sole purpose of gaining political points, with a phone in his hands, with rhythmic movements causing tension, he played the role of a Macedonian messiah, again unscrupulously demonstrating to the Macedonian and international public that in Macedonia, VMRO-DPMNE is the state and that there is no force that will take him off the throne. And as it had later been confirmed, the tragedy was largely a result of the decades of neglect by the local and central government!

SDSM leader Zaev urged citizens for humanity and solidarity to refrain from accusations and from public stigmatization of politicians at times of a tragedy. Convinced that in three weeks, at the announced meeting of the leaders, a decision would be made for the establishment of a transitional government and for scheduling elections on December 11, and that what was agreed in Przino will actually be realized.

The Special Prosecutor's Office (SPO) under the baton of Katica Janeva is working more dynamically in this period, but every step in the fight against crime in Macedonia is questioned because of the lack of cooperation of the Macedonian courts. The Skopje Criminal court rejected the three proposals of the SPO for issuing precautionary measures for those accused in the "Fortress" case. Their passports will not be confiscated, just as SPO's proposal for confiscating the passport of former Interior Minister Gordana Jankulovska was recently rejected. The only measure in effect is for Goran Grujovski, former Head of the Fifth Administration. The SPO believes it has evidence that the group had organized destruction of two systems for surveillance of communications, thus causing a 10-million-euro damage to the country. In the meanwhile, one of the suspects in the "Fortress" case, Toni Jakimovski, chief of

staff to former Director of the Administration for Security and Counterintelligence (UBK) Saso Mijalkov, is promoted to Director General of the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), an international body for combating crime, including organized crime in South Eastern Europe. Jakimovski is one of the 56 pardoned officials who were on the list of the now withdrawn, collective abolition of President Gjorge Ivanov.

On the political scene during this period, DUI did not hide its dissatisfaction with the ruling coalition. The Albanian opposition accused of major manipulations in the Voters Register and expresses doubt that the reforms will enable credible elections. For the BESA movement, the methodology is unsuccessful.

A week after the floods, when citizen activists were battling with rubble and mud, because the government had again failed, SDSM's parliamentary group proposed an extraordinary parliamentary session and demanded responsibility be taken. It was only after the eighth day that the Parliament passed measures for providing aid to the victims. The public accused the politicians of "buying" political points on the account of the victims.

On August 13, 2016, Macedonia marked 15 years since the Ohrid Framework Agreement was signed, which was supposed to put an end to the conflict and be a foundation for interethnic coexistence in the country. Unfortunately, citizens are still struggling for their basic human rights.

July and August

MACEDONIA IS OVER INDEBTING AHEAD OF THE DECISION FOR EARLY ELECTIONS!

In just 10 days until the meeting of the leaders of the four major parties: Gruevski, Zaev, Ahmeti and Thaci scheduled for August 31, when, upon the revision of what has been realized from the Przino Agreement, it is expected for the date of the early parliamentary elections to be set, Macedonia has widened its budget deficit by 4 percent. Not even the Eurobond in the amount of 450 euros issued on July 19, 2016 can cover the government's expenses. With the second rebalance of the budget, which has already been sent to Parliament, the families that have suffered great damage from the floods will receive advance payments in the minimal amount of only 500 euros. And, the government will just not give up on the "capital projects" – the Panoramic

wheel and Heavenly garden worth 33 million euros!

The "Fitch" rating agency has published that Macedonia's credit rating has downgraded from BB+ to BB. And all of this is because of the latest July borrowing with the Eurobond, the political crisis that started February last year, the several months of protests, the failure of the Przino Agreement and the unsuccessful parliamentary elections in April and June, 2016. But, also because of the obstructions to the work of the Special Prosecutor's Office. And now, the logical question is – how can the credit rating of a country which is in an economic renaissance be falling, with continuous investments and new employments (according to the government's vocabulary)?!

This is a period when the SPO notes greater activities, but court decisions are still far away. The Criminal Council of the Basic Court Skopje 1 extended the house arrest of Bitola Mayor Vladimir Taleski for an additional 30 days, for the case "Transporter". But Taleski's continued signing documents for the municipality, even a contract worth 5,4 million euros. The interrogation for the "Fortress" case is postponed, because former Minister Jankulovska, suspected for illegal destruction of equipment, demanded and inspection in the documents. The interrogation of the Mayor of the Municipality

of Center Andrej Zernovski, for the case of the demolishing of the Municipality in 2013, lasted for three hours. In the role of witnesses, Menduh Thaci, the leader of DPA leader, and Samka Ibraimovski, the leader of the Party for Total Emancipation of Roma, are to appear now in the SPO. The SPO established jurisdiction over the case "Spy", and demanded the case against journalist Zoran Bozinovski.

August-September

DATE OF ELECTIONS AGREED, EVERYTHING ELSE REMAINS UNCERTAIN

On August 31, 2016, the leaders of the four biggest parties agreed to hold early parliamentary elections on December 11, 2016, which will be the ninth consecutive elections since Macedonia's independence. The transitional government is to ensure conditions for holding free elections. The Parliamentary majority approved the new composition of the Macedonian Technical Government with a mandate of 100 days. The opposition that is led by SDSM is participating in this government as well with Frosina Tasevska-Remenski, Minister of Labor and Social Policy and Oliver Spasovski is the new Minister of Interior. Their duty, among else, is to depoliticize the ministries

and to direct the capacities and resources in the function of free elections. SDSM is participating with three deputy ministers: Kire Naumov for Finances, Aleksandar Kiracovski for Information Society and Administration and Ljupco Nikolovski for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy.

From VMRO-DPMNE, Oliver Andonov and Dime Spasov, along with Kire Naumov from SDSM remain without a position. It has been agreed for parliament to dissolve and to announce elections on October 12, 2016. Both VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM are hoping for electoral victory. Formal Prime Minister Dimitriev asks for appropriate cooperation, instead of conflicts between ministers and deputy ministers.

During this period, the government headed by party leader Gruevski is pulling some strange moves. The appointment of Oliver Andonov for Minister of Interior with a mandate of only 24 hours confirms the situation. He, on the other side, immediately appointed Mitko Cavkov (his predecessor) as the head of the Public Security Bureau, and then in accordance with the Przino Agreement resigned, in order to accept the new decision for an alternative deputy minister of the MOI in the transitional Government. This move indicates that the next 100 days in the MOI will be turbulent. The appointing of Cavkov over night for Director of the

Public Security Bureau and the employment of new party staff ahead of elections strengthens doubts in terms of the implementation of credible elections.

The Special Prosecutor rejected the appeals of those accused in the case “Spy”, but proposed a reduction of penalties, and requested probation for some of the accused. The Special Prosecution has put the “Skopje 2014” project under scrutiny. Minister of Culture, Elizabeta Kanceska – Mileska was summoned for a hearing. The richest Macedonian businessman Orce Kamcev also testified.

September

POLITICAL EARTHQUAKES SHAKE MACEDONIA

Macedonia’s citizens marked the 25 anniversary of the country’s independence (September 8, 2016) not only with the series of earthquakes that reached a 5.3 magnitude on the Richter scale, with an epicenter of just several kilometers from Macedonia’s capitol, in settlements that were struck by floods, but also with political earthquakes. It is difficult to establish or we can say there is no cooperation between the ministers of VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM. Staff changes are being made in

both of the following sectors: labor and social policy and in the interior. Just two days before the election of the provisional Government, VMRO-DPMNE has appointed its own cadre in governing bodies of about 30 state institutions. Directors, advisors, board members have all been changed overnight. It is most turbulent in the Centers for Social Work. Prior to Tasevska – Remenski (SDSM) arriving to the ministerial position, and with the replacement of Dime Spasov (VMRO-DPMNE), members of 12 board of directors in 14 centers and other social institutions in the country were appointed at a government session. Following Remenski’s appointment, in a single, nine directors of the centers informed the Ministry that they had taken sick leaves. The opposition says there had been also a similar scenario with Remenski’s first appointment in the Provisional Government.

The constitutionality of the SPO is still not on the agenda of the first session of the Constitutional court that is scheduled for September 28, although the four biggest political parties called on the Court to make a decision as soon as possible. According to the last annex of the Przino Agreement (August 31, 2016), in case the Constitutional Court should decide that the Law on the SPO or part of it is unconstitutional, the four parties commit to align the Law with the decision of the Court, and to reestab-

lish the Office within 5 days. According to the Agreement, “the effectiveness, scope and objectives of the SPO has to be maintained”.

Prosecutor Katica Janeva appealed to the Parliament to pass the changes to the Law on Witness Protection, so that this institution can get to the bottom of the Martin Neskovski case, the cases of “Monstrum” and “Sopot”. DUI declaratively say that they will support the work of the SPO, but they first need to receive the initiative for this.

The trial for the “Pouch case” has been delayed for the first of November, due to absence of one of the jurors. According to the leader of the opposition Zoran Zaev, the absence of the juror is just “covering up” the main witness, Gruevski, who has decided not to appear in Court. Special prosecutor Janeva reacted to the postponement and to the fact that the Court had not allowed reporters to follow the hearing.

For almost a week, the highest legislative body has been like a theatrical scene playing a parody of democracy, according to the government’s scenario. The Members of Parliament from the majority, below all ethical norms, have been “lashing out” at Special Prosecutor Katica Janeva with mockeries and sarcasm. The government’s media follower’s focus is on lace and not on the work of the Prosecutor. In a situ-

ation when the state has no capacity to create preconditions for solving the political crisis, the Colorful Revolution is again mobilizing. The political situation in the country is even more complex than before the Przino Agreement. The Colorful Revolution protests in front of Parliament as a sign of support for Janeva.

The Criminal Court hasn’t submitted an invitation to Gruevski for the following hearing of the case “Pouch”, although he is a witness in a case in which his biggest political rival Zaev is accused. The interconnection between the judiciary and the government is more than obvious. In the MOI there will be staff changes according to decisions of former Minister Cavkov. Goran Grujovski, accused and a suspect in two cases of the SPO, was appointed from Director of UBK to assistant coordination director of the MOI. With this move ahead of elections, all five administrations in the MOI are under the control of Grujovski, and criminal and misdemeanor charges are being filed against activists of the Colorful Revolution.

October

PARLIAMENT DIDN'T PASS THE LAWS FOR UNHINDERED WORK OF THE SPECIAL PROSECUTOR OFFICE

The Parliament did not pass the Draft Law on amending the Law on the SPO and the Draft Law on changing the Law on Witness Protection, which were to ensure unhindered work of the SPO until all criminal charges arising from the materials in regards to the “Wiretapping” affair have not been completed. The VMRO-DPMNE parliamentary group has remained in its position that it will not accept any consideration of any request of the SPO. The US Embassy issued an announcement in which it encourages all parties to adhere to the commitments undertaken with the agreements from Przino, in order to ensure credible elections and unhindered work of the SPO and of the independent media observers. The Embassy assured that the requests of the SPO for support of a thorough and independent investigation of facts are reasonable. CIVIL – Center for Freedom is continuously urging and expressing its support to the work of the SPO.

Concern and uncertainty is growing among citizens on whether there will be early parliamentary elections scheduled for December. European Commissioner Johannes

Hahn has arrived in Macedonia. He met with the leaders of the four political parties. He said that EU is closely following the pre-election process and that Macedonia should return to the Euro-Atlantic path. He pointed to the urgent reform priorities from Priebe’s Report, on the need of legitimate and regular elections and ensured that the work of the SPO would be supported.

EU diplomats: Richard Howitt, Eduard Kukan and Ivo Vajgl, at the meeting with representatives of Macedonian civil society organizations in Brussels, said that the elections on December 11 will be held. Vajgl recommended that some of the politicians in Macedonia– “should find good lawyers”!

October

ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED, THE COUNTRY IS AT A BOILING POINT!

Macedonian Parliament Speaker Trajko Veljanovski has dissolved the parliament and on October 18, 2016 announced the early parliamentary elections, which are to be held on the scheduled date of December 11, 2016. The parties are returning the mandates to the citizens. The decision on the elections also reached the State Election Commission (SEC), while members voted

unanimously for the campaign to begin on November 21. Party calculations have begun, MP list are being prepared. The biggest parties VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM, more specifically, the two leaders gruevski and Zaev will measuring forces in the Fourth Electoral Unit. Party surveys are being drawn up, ratings followed. Activists of the Colorful revolution appear on lists of SDSM and the Coalition "For Life in Macedonia". The SPO is continuing the fight against corruption. It has opened an investigation on the sale of the building plot in the settlement of "Soncev grad" in Sopiste, Skopje. In the case titled "Toplik", the SPO suspects six persons, among which is a former official in the Ministry of Transport and Communications, and the additional five are from the Procurement Committee. They are all charged for abuse of office, with which the Budget of Republic of Macedonia has been damaged by over a million euros. Former Minister Mile Janakievski completely denies all of the allegations of the SPO. The SPO opened a new case titled "Tenders", which suspects Minister of Culture Elizabeta Kanceska Mileska along with three other employees within the Ministry of Culture, for having damaged the state budget by a million euro, with the construction of the Museum of VMRO.

Struggling for a week and with two court orders the SPO managed to enter the UBK,

in order to obtain documentation on the special investigative measures (SIM) and data from the surveillance system. They collected part of the data, but Janeva faced serious obstructions by the UBK. It culminated with the act of the UBK forcing the SPO investigator out of the UBK building. The SPO investigator was also detained, after which the Prosecutor released him from the "BEKO" police station. Later Swedish firm "Ericsson" announced that it is not the owner, nor that it operates the surveillance equipment in the UBK, as a response to the demands of the SPO for technical assistance in the investigation that the SPO is carrying out in UBK. The Director of the Public Security Bureau, Chavkov, after the SPO entered UBK, claimed that the system is not owned by the MOI or the UBK, but rather that it is owned by the operator, and that only an unauthorized person from there can access this system.

Next followed the scandal in which Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Policy, Dime Spasov, cadre of VMRO-DPMNE, caused traffic accidents while driving under the influence of alcohol with an official vehicle at midnight on October 29, 2016. The series of events, changes in the statements of his co-passenger and employee in the Ministry, and the several days of silence and orchestrated interview with Spasov in pro-government media, only confirm

that in Macedonia the law “is used on demand” and that government officials are allowed to do everything.

On the other side of the barracks “Ilinden”, 40 stamps of the State Election Commission for the municipalities of: Sopiste, Brvenica, Butel and Lipkovo have disappeared. This was discovered by the commission of the SEC in doing inventory of the electoral materials. The SEC stated that new stamps would be made.

November

ELECTION CAMPAIGN BEGINS WITH FIERCE NATIONALIST RHETORIC

The election campaign for early parliamentary elections scheduled for December 11 began on November 11, 2016, in accordance with the legal deadlines. CIVIL – Center for Freedom urged 11 political entities, parties and coalitions participating in the electoral process to strictly adhere to the legal regulations, and said that it would inform the public should any violations be determined.

The SPO announced the case titled “Target”, which concerns the creators and main actors in the “Wiretapping” affair. The SPO submitted charges against 10 people, including former managing personnel of the UBK, directly accused for “abuse of

official position and of authority”, which have endangered the privacy and business interests of several thousands of citizens by eavesdropping on 5,827 phone lines in the period 2008 to 2015. The SPO indicated that the illegal wiretapping has been carried out through the abuse of the communications surveillance system, thus, violating the human rights and freedoms of thousands of citizens: politicians, journalists, businessmen...members of the ruling party and of the opposition, current and former political figures, with the exception of leader and former Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski, whose phone lines have not been the target of the “eavesdroppers”.

The election campaign continued with a low level of political culture. CIVIL in just one week received over 70 cases of election irregularities by observers on the ground, and about 100 applications from citizens on the early start of the election campaign, on abuse of state resources, on minors, recorded cases of corruption ... The SEC announced for CIVIL that there is no mechanism for deleting the so-called “phantoms”, because they are people who with legal documents and in a legal way have received their identity cards or passports.

The Austrian diplomat Sebastian Kurz paid a visit to Macedonia. Following the meet-

ing with his Macedonian counterpart Nikola Poposki, he stated that “the implementation of free and fair elections, along with the implementation of the urgent reform priorities, will enable Macedonia to return to the path that will lead it to the opening of negotiations for EU membership”.

His presence at VMRO-DPMNE’s rally in Skopje, stirred strong reactions on the social networks and was assessed as openly lobbying for the ruling party during the pre-elections period.

Citizens dissatisfied at protests demanded greater social rights and a stop to the air pollution. Tensions also increased in the SSM, after leader Zivko Mitrevski willingly expressed his support to Gruevski on behalf of SSM. The parties promised new jobs, while VMRO-DPMNE also promises investments that they have not realized in the past 10 years while in power. SDSM leader Zaev as leader of the coalition “For Life in Macedonia” promised bilingualism throughout the entire territory of Macedonia. This statement stirred commotion among VMRO-DPMNE’s electorate and the coalition “For a Better Macedonia”.

December

MACEDONIA VOTED UNPREPARED, AND HAS NOT FORMED A GOVERNMENT A MONTH AFTER ELECTIONS

The State Election Commission (SEC) closed the Voters Register with 1,531,368 voters in Macedonia. The verification confirmed that there were 230,122 voters from Macedonia who were temporarily staying and working abroad, who would not vote, and 20,573 citizens temporarily staying abroad, who would vote at these elections. The Voters Register was in complete chaos, filled with fictitious “phantom voters”, with deceased people who were still listed as “living” and “voting,” while many living, breathing Macedonian citizens who had voted in previous elections suddenly found themselves purged from the list, and unable to exercise their right to vote. Rather than helping these voters, and otherwise seeing to an orderly and fair election, the SEC continued to be non-transparent and unprofessional. The Macedonian media, which in an ideal world would have been a valuable tool in helping voters to make informed decisions, instead continued to be extremely biased in reporting, with many outlets dependent on the ruling party for government funding, and reporting accordingly. This resulted in an uninformed public

and a public opinion created according to the prism of the ruling VMRO-DPMNE. The Special Prosecutor's Office, in carrying out its mandated duties to investigate the illegal wiretapping scandal of 2015, stood accused by VMRO-DPMNE of helping the opposition party, SDSM. Thousands of citizens of Macedonia found themselves under a constant barrage of political campaigning, much of it false, and in many cases intimidation and pressure to vote for "the right party." The state administration also found itself under strong pressure and threats from the ruling VMRO-DPMNE. Managers on the ground, who were ostensibly to be carrying out government functions such as providing health care and education, in fact agitated for the party during working hours, often doling out what should have been government benefits under the guise that they were being provided by the ruling party, VMRO-DPMNE. People were even caught in the act of carrying out vote buying. Uncertainty! Fear! Restlessness among citizens before election day! This is how Macedonia was before the historic, early parliamentary elections.

Election Day passed peacefully, without incidents. CIVIL – Center for Freedom, however, recorded a large number of irregularities. The leader of the opposition, Zaev, declared victory. Almost an hour later, the leader of VMRO-DPMNE also declared

election victory. Citizens were waiting for the results with uncertainty. Celebrating at squares. Euphoric citizens, voters from one and the other option. And even after 18 hours, the SEC did not present a relevant report on the results of the election process!

The early parliamentary elections in Macedonia deepened the long-lasting political crisis. A week after the elections and Macedonia was still at a crossroads, with citizens faced with the decision between Euro-Atlantic integration and self-isolation. The situation grew ever more complex. SDSM and the coalition "For Life in Macedonia", along with the party of ethnic Albanians, BESA, decided to file complaints for election irregularities to the State Election Commission.

The SEC sessions, at which the complaints were reviewed, were accompanied by VMRO-DPMNE protests. In an organized manner, in front of the offices of the SEC in Skopje, with trumpets and drums, with dances and lighting fires, with hate speech and calls for a public lynch made by senior party officials, VMRO-DPMNE in this way pressured the work of the SEC. Numerous media organized live broadcasting of the sessions. The SEC decided to accept only one complaint filed by BESA, while the rest, including those filed by SDSM, were rejected.

Nikola Gruevski announced a Proclamation in front of the SEC offices, adopted by the Executive Committee of VMRO-DPMNE, which included 5 items, with which the party and Gruevski accused the SEC of post-electoral engineering and of forging the electoral will of the citizens

According to the proclamation, VMRO-DPMNE would not allow for the leader of SDSM to form a government, nor would it allow any further interference of ambassadors in intrapolitical issues of the country. He said that they needed to remain within the framework of their mandates and authorizations.

As Gruevski revealed, the party was leaving the format of meetings in which ambassadors and foreign mediators participate, and in which negotiations or decisions are made, which in any other country are adopted by representatives elected by the citizens. In the future they will not accept any non-standard or hybrid solutions in any area, if such solutions are not already implemented in other EU-member states.

VMRO-DPMNE also stated that it would not allow for cantons to be introduced or for redefining of the country under any conditions and circumstances. According to the Proclamation, VMRO-DPMNE would also fight for the “de-Soros-ization” of the Republic of Macedonia and the strengthening of an independent civil sector.

THE ELECTIONS END, THE PROBLEMS REMAIN

Based on a decision of the Administrative Court, which overturned the SEC decision rejecting a SDSM complaint citing irregularities, the SEC announced that on December 25 there would be an election rerun at polling station 2011 in the Municipality of Tearce. This concluded the elections, which according to the Przino Agreement were to put an end to the long-term political crisis in Macedonia. However, the results of the voting, 245 against 149 votes in favor of SDSM and the coalition “For Life in Macedonia”, with a turnout of 402 voters of the total number of 714 registered citizens with a right to vote, did not change the political constellation in terms of the seats won in the new parliament (VMRO-DPMNE – 51 and SDSM – 49, DUI -10, BESA – 5, DPA – 2 and the Albanian Alliance – 3).

The SEC handed over the certificates for the mandates of the 120 new MPs in the Macedonian Parliament. This composition of the Parliament has 62 new and 58 MPs from the previous composition.

Officially, the ninth consecutive parliamentary composition of Macedonia has been constituted. The three leaders of the Przino four: Nikola Gruevski, Zoran Zaev and Ah-

meti were present, but Thaci (DPA) did not appear this time. The inaugural session was attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps, religious communities, by Prime Minister Emil Dimitriev, while President Gjorgje Ivanov did not attend the session although he was invited. Once an agreement is reached on a new government coalition, the proposal for election of a new Parliament speaker will be reviewed.

The ministers and alternative ministers in the MOI and the MLSP who were appointed according to the Przino Agreement, have been dismissed, and a new cadre has been appointed in their place.

Accordingly, Agim Nuhiu from DUI undertakes the duties of current Minister of Interior, Oliver Spasovski. Ibrahim Ibrahimi also from DUI is appointed in place of Frosina Tasevska-Remenski, Minister of Labor and Social Policy. Alternative deputy ministers from VMRO-DPMNE, Oliver Andonov and Dime Spasov, along with Kire Naumov from SDSM remain without a position.

Although the legitimacy of the entire election process is very questionable, after the SEC handed over the mandates and at the first constitutive session they were approved, formally the requirements for the next step had been fulfilled. Given the majority of 51 seats, VMRO-DPMNE, more specifically Nikola Gruevski on January 9, received the mandate from President Ivanov to form

a new government. It remains uncertain as of this writing whether he will succeed in forming a government.

December - January

PLATFORM OF ETHNIC ALBANIAN PARTIES ADOPTED

Following consultations in Tirana and Pristina, the leaders of the parties of the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia adopted the Platform that is a condition for forming a coalition with the future partner in the Government.

Aware of having a key role in forming the future coalition, DUI, the Alliance of Albanians and BESA put together 30 demands, while "The Platform has a timeline for implementation. Among them, achieving full equality in accordance with the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the Constitution, strict application of the principle of multi-ethnicity of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, where Albanians are recognized as constituent people. Supporting any legal or constitutional initiative that reinforces ethnic equality of the Albanian population. Achieving full language equality, the use of the Albanian language at all levels of the government and ensuring its use as a fundamental and constitutional right. The Constitution of Republic of Macedonia should determine that the 'Macedo-

nian language with its Cyrillic alphabet and the Albanian language with its alphabet are the official languages in Republic of Macedonia'. A comprehensive debate on the flag, anthem and coat of arms of Republic of Macedonia, in order for the state symbols to reflect the social multi-ethnicity and ethnic equality. Adoption of a resolution in the Parliament of Republic of Macedonia that condemns the genocide against the Albanian people in Macedonia from 1912-1956, support to the unbiased work of the Special Prosecutor's Office, with no ethnic and political predispositions.

These demands of DUI, BESA and the Alliance of Albanians further stirred commotion, while political scientists and analysts estimate that the platform further complicated the already complex political situation in the country.

Many issues remain open: will all ethnic Albanian parties agree to sit down at a round table with Gruevski, who is accused of crimes in the "Wiretapping" affair? And just how prepared is he to withdraw on behalf of his membership, if one takes into consideration the fierce insults and nationalist rhetoric during the elections, directed towards the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia, but also the SPO's position?! Besa is categorical in that it will not negotiate with politicians who are involved in criminal pro-

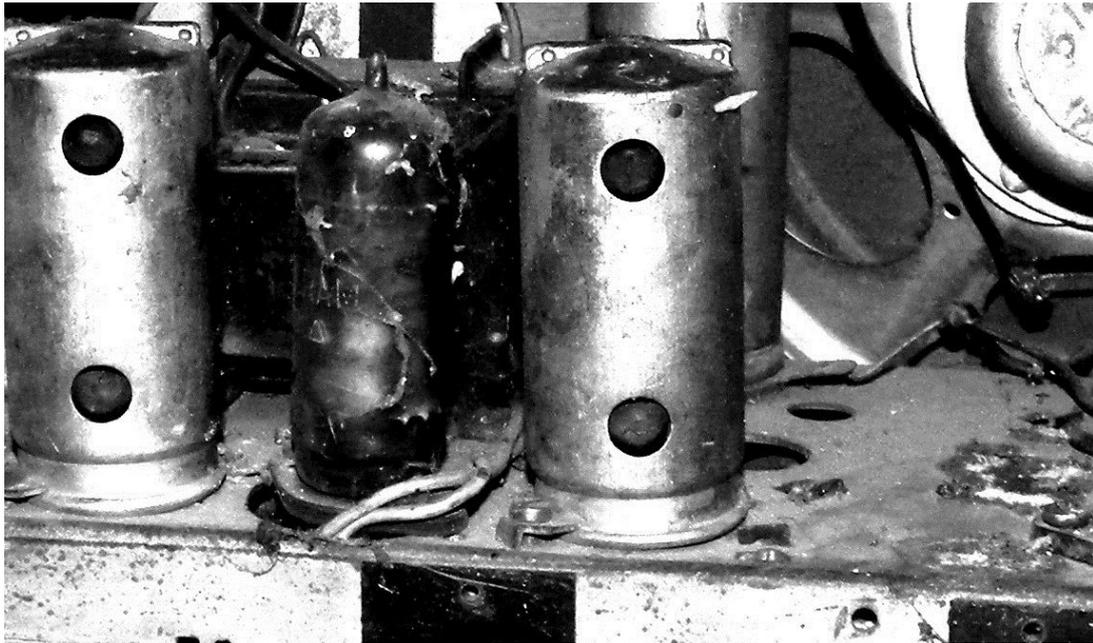
cedures. On the other hand, the Executive Committee of VMRO-DPMNE is quite clear that it will not accept bilingualism. The Platform is also against the continuation of the SPO!

Analysts comment that according to the law, if VMRO-DPMNE fails to form a government, that it should then return the mandate, and after that Ivanov should hand over the mandate to the party that has won the second largest number of seats, in this case SDSM. In the meanwhile, Zaev and Ahmeti have held a meeting. SDSM announced other meetings, although only the positions of the parties had been reviewed without negotiations.

The development of the political situation cannot be predicted. The international community is sending clear messages, to all the parties, that the SPO must be allowed to continue in its functions unhindered and that a democratic government be formed in order for Macedonia to return to the Euro-Atlantic path.

Post-electoral Macedonia is eroded at all the seams. Although January marks a new year, it has not presented a new beginning. In fact, Macedonia has started the year wracked with the same socio-political and economic problems as before, and, in the absence of a democratic government willing to respond to these very real chal-

lenges, they threaten to only grow worse. Citizens are frozen and frightened of whether they will have enough money for heating if the polar winter should continue. Following the Przino Agreement and the early parliamentary elections on December 11, Macedonia is at the beginning again, but many steps below.



THE BATTLES
WITH THE BAD
CYBER-WOLF



Ermin Klimenta on the field...

THE BATTLES WITH THE BAD CYBER-WOLF

ERMIN KLIMENTA

Following the long months of work that brought us this far, after all the insults, curses, and even frequent threats that we were able to read on the social networks, every day, but also the incomparably larger number of praises and expressions of full confidence and support addressed to CIVIL, it is time to take a breath and look back. None of us in CIVIL's team are spared from the curse of nationalism, evil, which fortunately, so far has still not managed to overwhelm the reasonable people in the country.

Look, being a system administrator is not an easy job at all, nor do I recommend that stress to any young person. However, I do it because it fulfills me and gives meaning to my everyday life. I know that I am doing something that I am proud of, and will be proud of. Only people who are in a similar situation can fully understand this...One very important thing that I would like to stress is loneliness, it is a real opponent to everyone in this job, my field of professional interest. Everyone has colleagues, but that does not mean they understand what you are doing. But, that is also quite alright.

CIVIL has been a target of fierce cyber-attacks for months now. How does that look? DDoS attacks are a type of attack on the server infrastructure, and they are usually targeted attacks on the servers of “enemies”. People who have only one goal, to prevent a large number of readers from reaching the content they are searching for and to cause trouble for the administrators.

The attacks on the website of CIVIL- Center for Freedom are constantly increasing, reaching a record of an 18GB – attack, on Sunday, December 11, 2016, on Election Day, the biggest attack ever in one day. Even though we are used to such attempts to silence us, we did, however, have a short period of 5 minutes when the site was inaccessible for the Macedonian public.

Usual attacks use about 200GB a month, but in the period from December 1 – 5, we had over 186GB in attacks – in just 10 days! This is like taking an excavator that digs one hole and replacing it with one ton of dynamite for the same hole.

The only thing that I can definitely conclude is that no one would deliberately harm an infrastructure like CIVIL with such power. We are a thorn in someone’s side, who is obviously paying nicely 300-500 euros per day (!) to lease a server that performs these attacks.

Their miserable attempts to hide behind the masks they are using (pun intended) are undoubtedly from Russian IP addresses that are really easy to detect, once the basic protocols for security of an ordinary website are set up. Their persistence and of course, the economic benefit for them from this side (without a doubt) leaves them constantly in an attack mode position, but this has also made us wiser, cleverer and far more determined.

Due to technical issues, I would not be able to get into more detail, and also for the security of the websites that I maintain. The thing the public, the readers and visitors should certainly know is that a person who is responsible for the infrastructure also has responsibility for the online existence of the media. This person needs to ensure uninterrupted flow of information, especially in critical moments.

The only thing that we will not allow as CIVIL – Center for Freedom is to succumb to influence, to temptation on the easier way of informing in a timely and objective manner. Our task, despite all the attacks of the “bad cyber wolf”, is to always provide timely and reliable information to the citizens of this beautiful, but tormented country.

The number of visits on CIVIL’s media outlets is constantly growing. The main website www.civil.org.mk reached a mark of 500,000 visits to the site in a period of 6 months (July 1 – December 31, 2016), while CIVIL’S other websites (7 websites and over 15 domains) also reached over 350,000 site visits in the same period.

All this brought CIVIL’s websites in an impressive framework of sites that index various parameters, such as site visits, visit duration, number of visited pages and other criteria, so at the end to give a list of most visited sites by country and globally. CIVIL’s websites, given the specialized and non-commercial content that is published under the Creative Commons license (for free download and republishing), are a frequent destination for a very broad audience that follows contents in Macedonian, Albanian and English. Based on the online analytics that are performed by global organizations and companies, over which we have no influence, we can gladly and proudly conclude that CIVIL is among the most influential online resources in the country.

CIVIL’s tireless team is to be credited for all the success, but also the online outlet www.facebook.com/civil.mk with its 4.7 million visits in the period mentioned. Think about it, 4.700.000, that means that every citizen of Macedonia, including newborns, have read at least 2 news articles of CIVIL in the past 6 months.

We in CIVIL can proudly confirm that we did not succumb at any moment. We do not give up, we do not surrender and do not apologize if we are right! We stand strong before all those threatening us with “witch hunt”, and we will fight against injustice. To the end.

Online – we are all online, 24/7 – 7 days a week – 365 days in the year, and with the great and rapid development of the mobile technology, smart phones have become part of our everyday lives, even for pessimists like myself who used to say that the

phone will never be able to replace a desktop computer or laptop. Today, thanks to my phone I can go out for coffee, and at the same time supervise the entire infrastructure of the network I maintain. Freedom of movement, that is the true expression with which to describe this feeling.

CIVIL's online presentation has always been unique in the Macedonian web space, but also on the social networks, where we rank in first place in many categories. But, nevertheless, our favorite thing is the trust of our readers who have been with us for a long time and support us in what we do every day with hard work.

CIVIL has several outlets that are used for informing the public on various topics, ranging from the political processes and the elections in the country up to social justice, environment and culture.

CIVIL has been present on the online space ever since it was established in 1999. Its first website www.civil-mk.org was launched back in 2001. The website www.civil.org.mk was registered in 2003, as an organizational and later also as a media outlet of CIVIL Media. This website helped journalists widen their horizons, produced superb cadre who can be found in prestigious media across the country. The website www.civil.org.mk recently stopped functioning as a media outlet and returned to its initial function – to represent the organization and its activities. With this step we expect the visits to the site to remain high, but we are sure that the site visits of CIVIL's other media outlets will grow incredibly.

Here, primarily, we are talking about www.civilmedia.mk, www.civilalb.info, www.civil.org.mk today, but also several others (www.greencivil.mk, www.clp.mk, www.freedom.mk), which are new info portals.

A little more statistics.

In the period July 1 – December 31, 2016, the organization's site www.civil.org.mk had over 500,000 views, with which it became one of the most visited websites of non-governmental, but also of media organizations in Macedonia.

The social profiles that we use most often for real time live streaming are YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Live stream views reached over 20,000 viewers per posts on the day of the voting, and more than 2.500 on the YouTube channel CivilMacedonia.

CIVIL's media coverage on national televisions such as Telma, 24 News, TV 21 and others, had an influence on the increase in CIVIL's viewership and visibility, through their live coverages. According to latest statistics of the AVMS (Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services) the viewership of these media was over 800,000 viewers at the national level.

Macedonia has a proud (underground) Twitter community that actively followed the election process through @CivilMacedonia's Twitter handle that received more than 60,000 impressions with its tweets during Election Day.

That will be all from me for now. See you online!



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The projects on monitoring of political processes and early parliamentary elections in the Republic of Macedonia provided non-partisan, objective and relevant information for the Macedonian and international public during the entire period of implementation.

CIVIL – Center for Freedom conducted long-term monitoring and analysis of the processes and events related to the long-lasting political crisis in the country, as well as of all the important aspects of the election process, which was seen as a significant step towards overcoming the difficult situation.

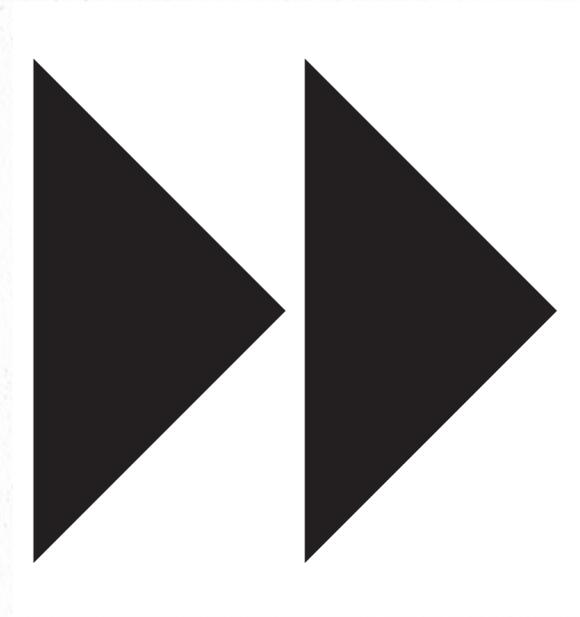
The material that was collected from the field by CIVIL's numerous contributors and associates was continuously processed, verified and systemized, whereas the public was informed on all of the organization's findings and activities every day. Each field reports was subjected to a comprehensive and in-depth analysis, and the most important parts of that material is presented in this publication, which represents a testimony on the conditions in Republic of Macedonia, and a document that can serve as a basis for further research, but also as a guide for positive changes in society and the state.

CIVIL deployed long-term observers in 14 regional centers that cover the entire territory of Republic of Macedonia. Their work was coordinated and verified by the mobile teams and the 14-member project team in Skopje, among which is also the team of CIVIL Media, composed of professional journalists.

CIVIL also formed an expert team which, apart from the experts within the CIVIL's project team, included: Dr. Saso Ordanoski, Aleksandar Novakoski and Sandra Gavrilovska from Macedonia, Dragan Zelic and Marina Skrabalo from GONG, Republic of Croatia, Aleksandra Jozic-Ilekovic from the Centre of Excellence within the Croatia Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, and Heather Roberson, human rights experts from the United States.

On the Election Day, December 11, 2016, CIVIL deployed 308 accredited observers, who were all mobile, without any exception. They visited almost 2,000 polling stations, which is more than half of all the polling stations in the country. CIVIL's monitoring teams also included experts from GONG, Croatia, along with several leaders and active members of non-governmental organizations from the country and abroad.

CIVIL's analytical team, which included a representative from GONG, Croatia, counted twenty people on the Election Day. They were receiving and processing the reports from the field, whereas the media team was preparing press-conferences and expert panel discussions. CIVIL held six press-conferences and a large number of individual briefings for media from the country and abroad. CIVIL organized three expert panel discussions throughout the Election Day and in the evening, after polling stations were closed. CIVIL has continued with post-election monitoring and monitoring of the political processes in the country.



Logo: FORWARD!

2016

CIVIL projects on monitoring, awareness-raising and education

FORWARD!

election monitoring project

FREE ELECTIONS FOR FREE CITIZENS

project for education, awareness-raising and monitoring

WE ARE WATCHING

election monitoring project

FREEDOM CARAVAN

human rights and freedoms awareness-raising project

CIVIC LENSES

citizen journalism project

CIVICA MOBILITAS

institutional development grant



Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Skopje

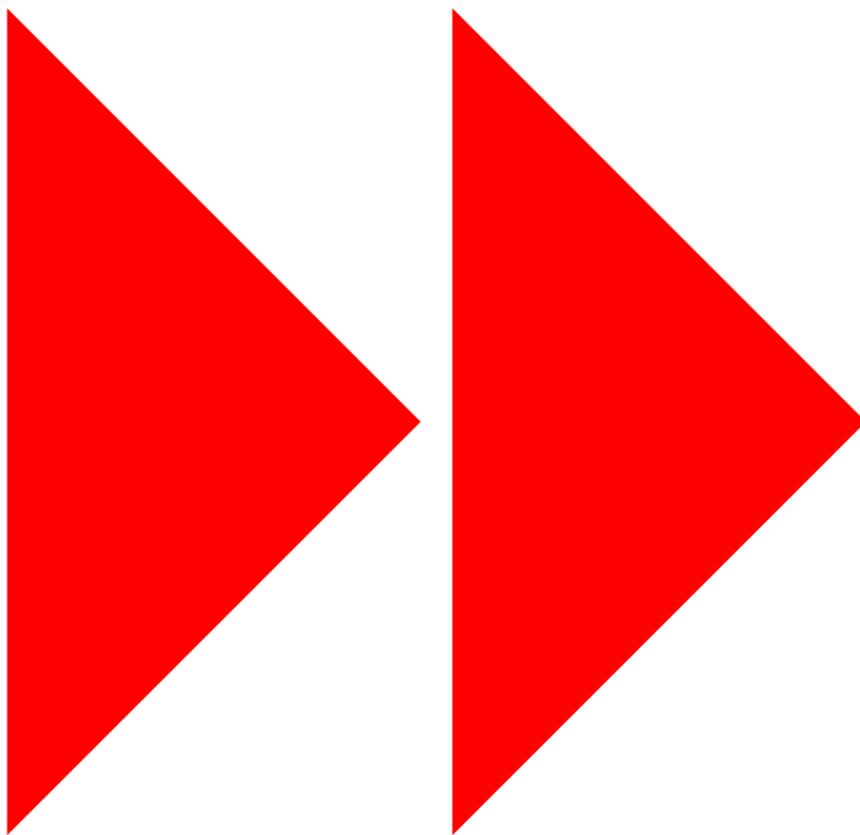


USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**National Endowment
for Democracy**
Supporting freedom around the world





Project: FORWARD!

www.civil.org.mk